IMAGES OF WAR

LEIBSTANDARTE SS ADOLF HITLER (LSSAH) AT WAR 1939–1945

A HISTORY OF THE DIVISION ON THE WESTERN AND EASTERN FRONTS

RARE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM WARTIME ARCHIVES

IAN BAXTER

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LEIBSTANDARTE SS ADOLF HITLER AT WAR 1939–1945

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Ian Baxter

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About the Author

Ian Baxter is a military historian who specialises in German twentieth century military history. He has written more than forty books including *'Wolf' Hitler's Wartime Headquarters*, *Poland – The Eighteen Day Victory March*, *Panzers in North Africa*, *The Ardennes Offensive*, *The Western Campaign*, *The 12th SS Panzer Division Hitlerjugend*, *The Waffen-SS on the Western Front*, *The Waffen-SS on the Eastern Front*, *The Red Army at Stalingrad*, *Elite German Forces of World War II*, *Armoured Warfare*, *German Tanks of War*, *Blitzkrieg*, *Panzer Divisions at War*, *Hitler's Panzers*, *Panzer Markings of World War Two*, *German Armoured Vehicles of World War Two*, *German Guns of the Third Reich* and most recently *The Last Two Years of the Waffen-SS at War*, *SS of Treblinka*, *Hoess – creator of Auschwitz*, *Auschwitz Death Camp*, *The SS of Treblinka*, *Battle of the Baltics*, *Battle for the Reich*, *Hitler's Heavy Panzers*, *German Army on the Eastern Front*, *German Army on the Western Front*, *Last Years of the German Army*, and *Concentration Camp Guards*. He has written over a hundred articles including 'Last Days of Hitler', 'Wolf's Lair', 'The Story of the V1 and V2 Rocket Programme', 'Secret Aircraft of World War Two', 'Rommel at Tobruk', 'Hitler's War with his Generals', 'Secret British Plans to Assassinate Hitler', 'The SS at Arnhem', 'Hitlerjugend', 'Battle of Caen 1944', 'Gebirgsjäger at War', 'Panzer Crews', 'Hitlerjugend Guerrillas', 'Last Battles in the East', 'Battle of Berlin', 'Destruction of Busse's Ninth Army', and many more. He has also reviewed numerous military studies for publication, and supplied thousands of photographs and important documents to various publishers and film production companies worldwide.

Introduction

From its organisation, to its training, to its fighting on the Western and then the Eastern Front, this book describes the fighting tactics, the uniforms, the battles and the different elements that went into making the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (LSSAH) the elite fighting unit that it was. It describes how the LSSAH carefully built up its assault forces, utilising all available resources, making into an awesome killing machine. It depicts how it grew to be used in both offensive and later defensive battles, and provides much historical information and many facts about the weapons and components that made it up. Throughout the chapters it describes how the LSSAH fought in some of the fiercest and bloodiest battles of the Second World War, how it evolved, and how during the last years of the war it was shifted from one disintegrating part of the front to another in a desperate attempt to stabilise the crumbling war effort.

With 194 rare and unpublished photographs, captions and text, *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler at War 1939–1945* brings together a captivating glimpse of the workings of one of the most effective SS weapons ever used in military history.

A Brief History

The history of what later became known as the 1st SS-Panzer Division *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (1.SS-Pz.Div.LSSAH) began in 1925 as Adolf Hitler's personal bodyguard unit, or *Schutzkommando* (protection commando). Its duties included guarding the Führer and protecting his offices and residences. The unit was later renamed the *Sturmstaffel* (assault squadron) and later the *Schutzstaffel* (guard detachment) and abbreviated to SS.

By 1933 the SS had increased in size dramatically from a small bodyguard unit to a formation of over 50,000 men. It was then decided to create a new bodyguard unit, comprising mainly men from the 1st SS-Standarte. During this period the two *Sonderkommandos* were merged into what was called the *SS-Sonderkommando Berlin* under the dutiful command of Josef 'Sepp' Dietrich. In November 1933, during the 10th anniversary of the Beer Hall putsch, the members of the *Sonderkommando* swore personal allegiance to Hitler and the unit received a new title, *Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* (LAH).

Five months later, on 13 April 1934, *SS-Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, commander of the SS, ordered the LAH to be renamed *Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler* (LSSAH). The LSSAH were immediately formed into two companies under the control of Jürgen Wagner and Otto Reich.

The LSSAH was given the task of guard of honour at a number of the Nuremberg rallies. In 1935 it moved its formations into the Saarland where they reoccupied it. The LSSAH was later in the vanguard of the march into Austria as part of the Anschluss, and in 1938 the unit took part in the occupation of the Sudetenland.

By late 1938 the LSSAH became a full infantry regiment with three infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, and anti-tank, reconnaissance and engineer sub-units. It then became involved in the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia and was re-designated *Infanterie-Regiment Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (mot.)*.

In mid-1939 Hitler ordered the formation of an SS division, and as a direct consequence the *Leibstandarte* was designated to form its own unit and readied for war.

Chapter One

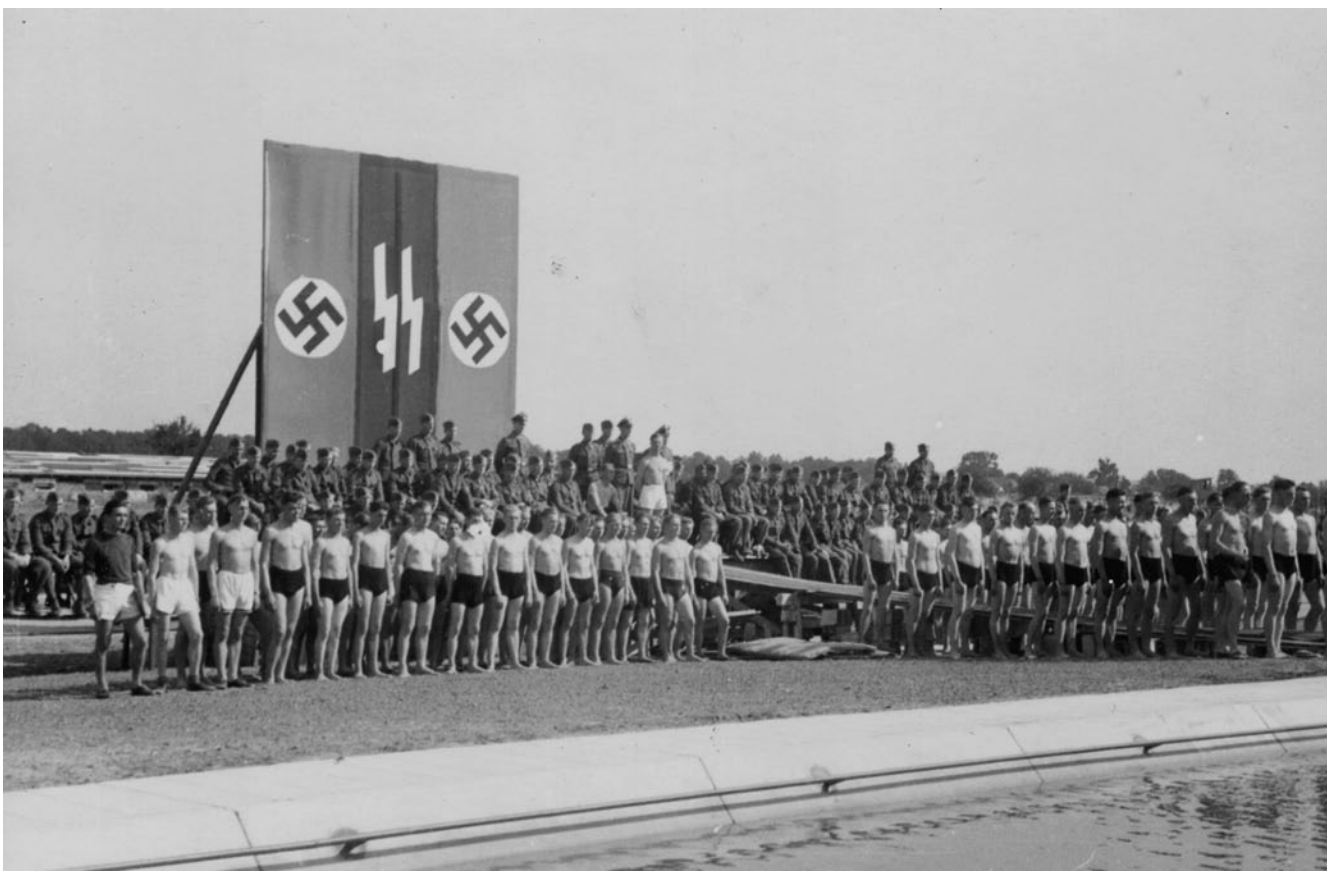
Training for War

Between 1933 and 1939, the power of the SS grew considerably with thousands of men being recruited into the new ideological elite armed formation under the command of Himmler. Every recruit was expected to meet stringent criteria. Every volunteer had to be fit with excellent racial features and produce a certificate of good behaviour from the police. During their tough training programme new recruits were indoctrinated with a fanatical determination to fight for the Führer, a willingness to shed their own blood on the battlefield, and a blind allegiance to obey every order, even if that meant shooting prisoners and committing atrocities against civilians.

Initial training was carried out in various depots outside each SS-VT regiment's home town and was tough and demanding. On the rifle ranges recruits became used to their rifles and, once familiar, were taught infantry assault techniques that included charging at sandbags with fixed bayonets. Every instructor placed emphasis on aggression on the battlefield, physical endurance, a determination to overcome the enemy quickly and efficiently with the least number of friendly casualties, and to win at all costs. Every candidate was pushed to the limits of endurance, being regularly sent on long marches in order to develop stamina. Out on exercise they carried only weapons, ammunition, water bottles and field dressings, and were not weighed down by heavy packs like their Army counterparts.

At least three times a week the trainees attended formal lectures covering the policies of the Nazi party, including in-depth indoctrination into the SS philosophy of racial superiority. The men were ordered to treat enemies of the Reich with fanatical hatred. This included the Jews. By perpetually drilling the recruits to hate, they made them not think twice about meting out severe punishments to transgressors. Training in Nazi philosophy was relentless and were aimed at producing men who ardently believed in the new Aryan order. Regularly they had to listen to their teachers lecturing them about anti-Semitism. On the bulletin boards inside the SS barracks and canteen there were copies of the racist newspaper *Der Stürmer*, a newspaper that intended to foment hatred and violence.

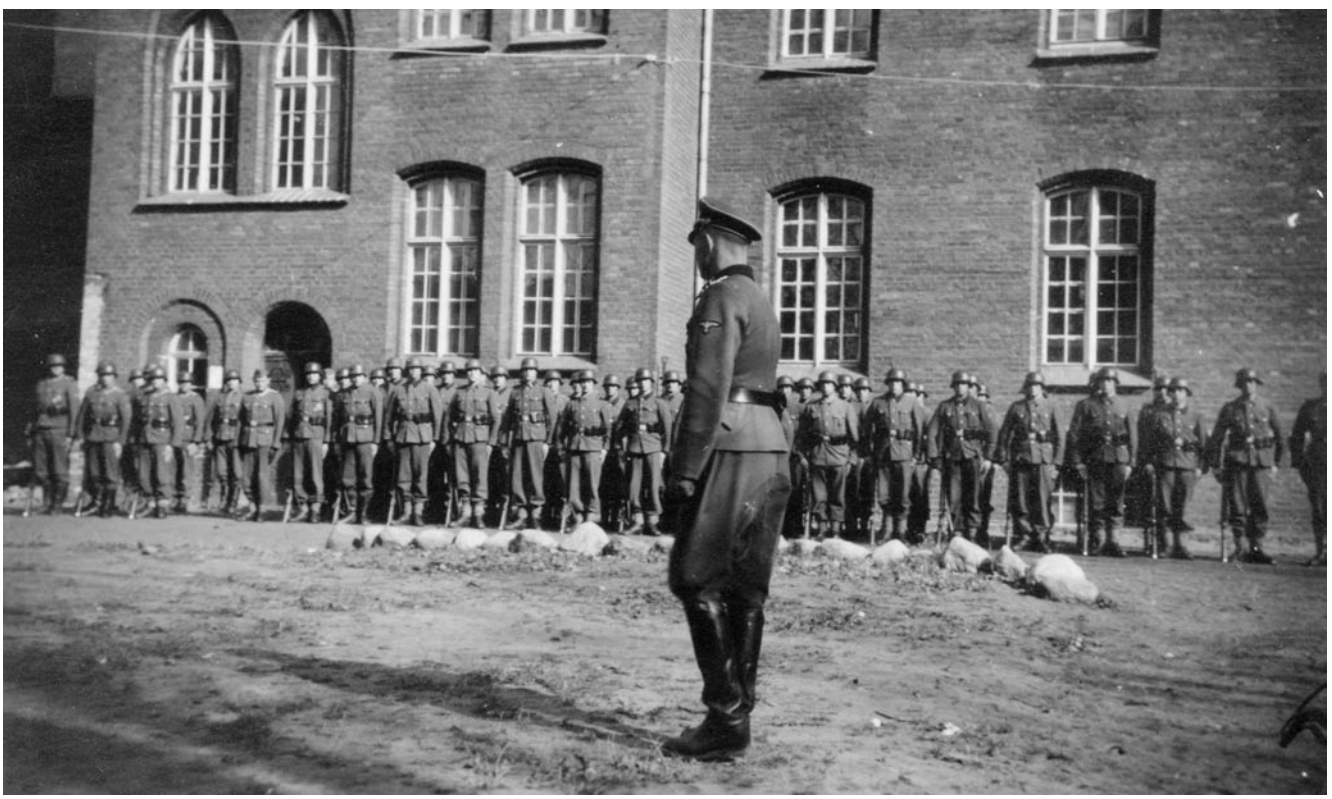
As a result of this training and indoctrination in SS philosophy, the recruit placed little value on his own life, and even less on his enemy's.



(**Opposite, above**) A photograph showing the main administrative building of the LSSAH training camp in 1938 Every trainee that entered the training camp was pushed to the limits of his endurance. These men were constantly sent on long foot marches with or without full kit, to develop stamina and endurance.

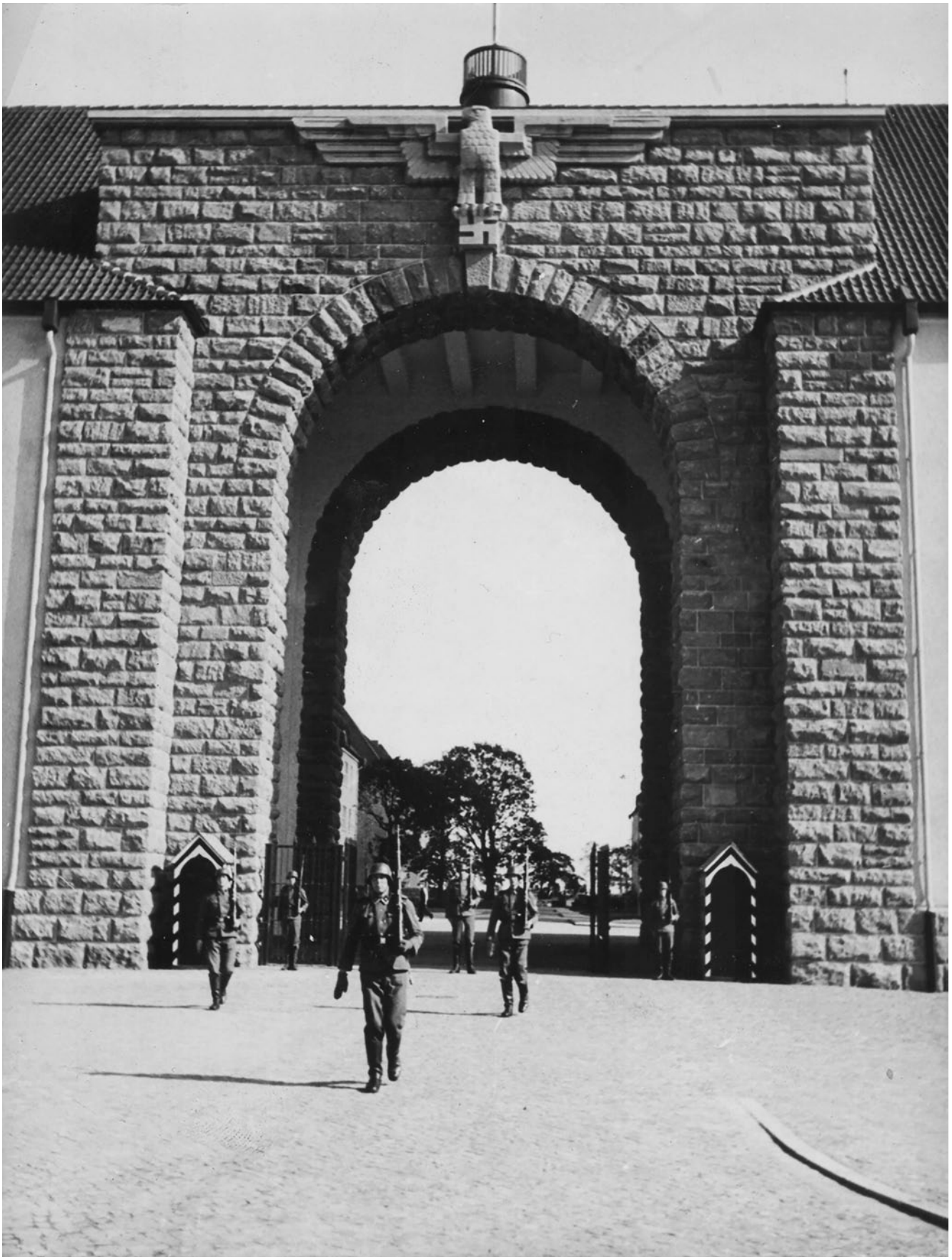
(**Opposite, below**) SS recruits next to a swimming pool in readiness for a swimming competition. Competing against each other was a key part of SS training; instructors put great significance on each man doing his utmost to win against his comrades.

(**Above & following**) Five photographs showing recruits swearing their allegiance to the Führer, and a passing out parade. These men regarded their role in the SS not like that of their regular army counterparts. For them, their blind faith in Adolf Hitler enabled them to go into combat armed with a fanatical allegiance to the Führer and a readiness to face the prospect of almost certain death to a far greater extent than most soldiers.



An early photo of a newly enlisted Leibstandarte recruit. The period of enlistment in the original LSSAH was initially four years. However, by 1938 this had trebled to twelve years. Before joining, all recruits had to go through a period of conscription in the armed services. Although this was intended to give them basic military training, not all the recruits were very happy undergoing another spell in military service once they had completed their national service. It would not be until May 1939 that Hitler finally ordered that service in the LSSAH would count towards compulsory military requirement.

(**Opposite page**) A photograph showing the entrance to the LSSAH training station. The trainees that passed through these gates were going on to create a perfect political fighting machine which proved a great attraction to the men that joined. They ardently believed that stretching themselves both physically and mentally marked them as true Nordic Germans, complete and proven men of Hitler's military elite.



(**Above and the facing page**) LSSAH troops on a march from their barracks with their commanding officer leading them along a road. By the time these men fought on the battlefield they were physically hardened and imbued with fanatical hatred both against opponents of the Reich and those regarded as racially impure. They were ideal candidates to wreak often terrible crimes both on and off the battlefield.

Out on manoeuvres LSSAH troops march quickly along a road. One of the soldiers is armed with an MG34 machine gun slung over his shoulder. In the early stages of SS recruitment every new volunteer had to be fit with excellent racial features and produce a certificate of good behaviour from the police. Although the recruitment criteria for the volunteers was difficult, the training was more so.

A portrait photograph of a young SS soldier, probably from the LSSAH. He wears the M1935 steel helmet with the SS décor stamped on the right side. His tunic has the SS rune sewn onto it.

(**Opposite, above**) SS recruits studying a map in one of the training huts prior to a military exercise. The SS were taught that the 'only form of defence on the battlefield was to attack'. Such aggressive training led to fatalities, but the SS were firm believers in the 'train hard, fight easy' school. The training made the average SS man ready to risk his life for the benefit of the Führer.

(**Above**) Out on manoeuvres is an SS training unit standing in file next to a river. Note the grey-white cotton drill trousers being worn by the soldiers. This was produced in the summer of 1933 for training purposes for the Heer and later for the SS as well.

(**Opposite, below**) Members of the LSSAH during a training exercise. In the snow they all wear the standard army greatcoat and field cap with the infamous death head badge that soon symbolized the Waffen-SS on the battlefield.

SS recruits learnt all aspects of marching, including skiing. Skis would soon become a practical piece of kit for the army's advance across the Soviet union in the winter periods of the war.

SS troops during a passing out ceremony. The recruits wear the standard infantryman's equipment and are armed with the 98K bolt action rifle, which became the standard most widely used rifle in both the Waffen-SS and the regular army.

Another photograph showing SS troops during a passing out ceremony.

A photograph showing SS machine gunners practicing with the MG34 machine gun in a light role on a bipod. The MG34 would soon prove an invaluable weapon to the SS both in a defensive and offensive role.

(**Above**) Another photograph showing SS machine gunners practicing with an MG34. This machine gun would be used extensively throughout the war and would become a much feared and revered weapon.

(**Opposite page**) Two photographs showing Hitler's motorcade during a visit by the Italian dictator Mussolini to Germany. Lining the road, Leibstandarte troops can be seen guarding the route for the Führer. The LSSAH began as Hitler's personal bodyguard, responsible for guarding the Führer's person, offices, and residences.

Two photographs showing Pioneers assisting troops of the LSSAH on manoeuvres in 1939. It would be the pioneers that would lay the bridges for the advanced units of the Heer and Waffen-SS, and they would play a significant role on the Western Front in 1940, and then in Russia a year later.

Pioneers are putting together heavy pontoon sections of a bridge over a river crossing during a training exercise. This heavy bridge was able to sustain tracked and support columns.

A 7.5cm leichtes Infanteriegeschütz 18 (7.5cm le.IG.18) during training. This gun was an infantry support weapon used during the early part of the war.

LSSAH sentry guards pose for the camera in 1939. The guards wear the M32 greatcoat, made of authentic black wool, and the M1918 steel German Army helmet.

Newly recruited LSSAH troops in the winter in early 1939. They are being drilled by their commanding officer. They all wear standard issue kit including their 98K bolt action rifles, and wear the M35 steel helmet.

Training for the new recruits was often hard and intensive. Out on exercise the men were sometimes issued with live rounds. Here in this photograph soldiers are armed with their 98K carbines practising shooting under the watchful eye of their trainer.

Chapter Two

Baptism of Fire 1939–41

When the invasion of Poland was unleashed on 1 September 1939, the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler moved across the Polish border attached to the 17th Infantry Division. Its prime objective was to advance in a south-easterly direction and protect the southern pincer.

The thrust of the Leibstandarte, together with its Wehrmacht counterparts, was swift. The advancing soldiers were almost unopposed, encountering only a disorganized jumble of Polish units.

But following this initial excitement of battle, the rapid capture of the first towns and villages, the dramatic seizure of heavily fortified positions, and the clearance of the frontier area, the mood among the men slowly changed, as certain parts of the front stiffened and congealed. They began to learn the costs of conflict. The Germans found the quality of their opposition uneven. At one moment a handful of them were receiving wholesale enemy surrenders, while in other sectors an entire division might find itself being held up by the stubborn resistance of a company of Polish troops with a detachment of artillery and anti-tank guns. Yet despite the determination of these brave Polish soldiers, fast and devastatingly efficient Blitzkrieg had arrived. Bewildered Polish commanders struggled despairingly to hold their forces together, paralysed by developments they had not faintly expected. They could not organize their troops in the utter confusion. In many areas the collapse of the communication system had left many commands isolated. Consequently, decisions were almost invariably late and therefore disastrously overtaken by events with the result that one position after another would be lost to the Germans. Already the fleeing Polish Army were being mauled almost to death by constant air attacks and pounded mercilessly by tanks and artillery.

The Poles were faced with the finest fighting army the world had ever seen. Leibstandarte tactics showed resilience, stubborn defence, concentrated local fire-power from machine-guns and mortars and rapid counter-attacks to recover lost ground. Soldiers often fought on even when cut off, which was not a mark of fanaticism but of masterly tactical discipline.

In the town of Pabianice near Lodz, SS soldiers were embroiled in heavy fighting against the Polish 28th Infantry Division and the Wolynska Cavalry Brigade. Here the SS fought with skill and determination, crushing their foe.

While the SS regiment showed its fighting élan on the battlefield, against the civilian population it was merciless. During its march across Poland the SS burned down villages and carried out massacres, including the murder of fifty Jews in Blonie, and the massacre of 200 civilians, including women and children, in Zloczew.

During the last weeks of the campaign in Poland, the LSSAH was attached to the 4th Panzer Division near Warsaw where the SS regiment saw some of its fiercest fighting of the war. Its objective was to prevent encircled Polish units from escaping. What followed was a bloodthirsty contact that was fought doggedly and methodically in and around the battered town of Sochaczew. The battle, which became known as the Battle of the Bzura, resulted in the destruction of nearly a quarter of the Polish Army. It was the only major Polish counter-offensive of the campaign and the largest single action, involving over fifteen German divisions, including two of the most powerful Panzer divisions, and three light divisions, against some nine Polish infantry divisions and two cavalry brigades.

While the campaign in Poland was swift, the LSSAH and SS-VT units had sustained a higher casualty rate than their *Heer* (German Army) counterparts. This was due to often risky operations and close quarter contacts without additional support. As a result, their fighting tactics were reassessed.

Following the victory over Poland, the LSSAH continued expanding, and by early 1940 it was turned into a fully independent motorized infantry regiment and a *Sturmgeschütz* (assault gun) battery was added to their establishment.

Months later, the SS infantry regiment saw itself yet again preparing for war, this time on the Western Front. In early May 1940 it was moved along the Dutch border where it was to form the vanguard of the ground attack through Holland. Its key objective was to capture a vital bridge over the IJssel, penetrating deep into enemy lines and linking up with the *Fallschirmjäger* (paratroops).

On 10 May 1940 the invasion of the Low Countries and France was launched. The LSSAH drove over the Dutch border and covered almost 50 miles before it reached its first objective over the IJssel. They found the target bridge had already been destroyed, but this did not deter the soldiers of the LSSAH. For nearly a week they pushed forward to Rotterdam. Following the surrender of the city it moved on to The Hague, on 15 May, after capturing 3,500 Dutch soldiers.

After the surrender of Holland, the regiment was moved south into France. At Arras the LSSAH successfully fought against British armoured units before it pushed north eastwards, along with the men of the *SS-Verfügungs-Division*. These SS units were tasked with holding the perimeter around Dunkirk and reducing the pocket comprising the encircled BEF (British Expeditionary Force) and French forces. It

seemed that Dunkirk would soon be captured, but on the night of 26 May Hitler rescinded his famous 'halt order', and the men of the Leibstandarte and SS-Verfügungs-Division surged back into action and fought a bloody battle in the Nieppe forest, Wattenberg and Wormhoudt. It was in Wormhoudt that soldiers of the Leibstandarte 2nd Battalion committed the Wormhoudt massacre, where eighty British and French prisoners of war were rounded up and murdered.

With the first phase of the war in the west completed, the Battle of France began. On 5 June 1940, German Panzergruppen attacked along the whole line. As elements of Panzergruppe Kleist steamrolled towards Paris, the Leibstandarte and the SS-Verfügungs-Division joined the main drive. By the time the SS formations arrived on the outskirts of Paris the French capital had been abandoned by its government. Panzergruppe Kleist, including the *Totenkopf*, Leibstandarte and the SS-Verfügungs-Division, struck through Champagne toward Dijon in Burgundy to prevent the remnants of the French Army retreating to the south-west of France.

By the end of June the campaign in the west was finally over and the SS troops returned to their home stations. The LSSAH went to Metz where the unit trained and was expanded. A Flak battalion and a StuG battery was added and troop strength was increased to 6,500 soldiers.

During the latter months of 1940 the regiment was trained on amphibious assaults on the Moselle river in preparation of the invasion of England, known as Operation Sea Lion. Following the cancellation of the invasion order of Britain, the Leibstandarte was moved to Bulgaria in February 1941 in preparation for Operation Marita, part of the planned invasion of Greece and Yugoslavia.

On 6 April 1941, the Leibstandarte attacked from Bulgaria through Yugoslavia, and then on to Greece. In the days that followed, the Leibstandarte outmanoeuvred and outfought their opponents until they captured the stronghold of Monastir near the Yugoslav-Greek border. At the Klidi Pass the SS were met by firm resistance, comprising British and Australian troops who were determined at all costs to hold the mountain crests that dominated the pass. But yet again the SS demonstrated their skill and tenacity and fought a number of fierce unrelenting battles until they drove their brave enemy from their bombed and blasted defences.

Within days the SS drove forward against further resistance and cut off the remnants of the British forces. They went on and continued to drive retreating columns of confused enemy troops off the Metzovon Pass, thus sealing the fate of sixteen divisions of the Greek Army. The ensuing days saw the SS in hot pursuit of British forces who were fleeing for their lives.

By 27 April, German forces finally entered Athens, and before the end of the month were in full control of the country. The Balkan Campaign for the SS was now at an end. Just before its victorious troops returned to barracks in Czechoslovakia to

refit and prepare for their next campaign, units of the Leibstandarte were ordered to take part in another victory parade, this time in Athens.

The campaign in the Balkans had been a great triumph for the SS. With its skill, daring and élan, Hitler believed they were virtually invincible. By June 1941 its divisions found themselves poised ready for action on the Eastern Front, this time against the Soviet Union.

An eight-wheeled Sd.Kfz.231 heavy armoured vehicle leads a column of other armoured vehicles during the invasion of Poland in September 1939. Note the vehicle has a white-painted cross. This was for ground and aerial recognition purposes, but later in the campaign the Germans found the enemy used the cross as a target. As a consequence the crosses were painted out.

Two photographs taken in sequence showing an Sd.Kfz.231 heavy armoured vehicle attached to the Leibstandarte during urban contact in a town in Poland. During the early part of the invasion, the Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler was attached to the 17.Infanterie-Division with the main objective of providing protection for the flank of the southern pincer manoeuvre. The regiment was embroiled in several fierce engagements against Polish cavalry.

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(**Opposite, above**) Troops belonging to the Leibstandarte sort through a bag along the Warsaw-Sochaczew Road. Note the carnage and devastation along the road including abandoned carts and dead horses. Scenes like this were typical during the Polish campaign. Along this road it was the 103rd SS-Leibstandarte artillery regiment that saw the brunt of the heavy fighting. What followed was a bloody contact that was fought doggedly and methodically in and around the battered town of Sochaczew. What followed was known as the Battle of the Bzura.

(**Above**) Infantry on the march through a Polish village. Although the German drive through Poland was swift, the resilience and the chivalry shown by the Poles in several battles caused genuine surprise among the German troops, even to the most hardline SS soldiers.

(**Opposite, below**) Troops pose for the camera in front of a vehicle. Their gas mask canisters can be seen slung over the front of their chest, indicating that these men are probably part of a motorcycle unit.

Two photographs taken at Christmas in 1939 showing a typical quarters of the Leibstandarte. During the winter of 1939–40, the SS trained for the battles which would be fought in the west. Hitler visited the Leibstandarte quarters in December 1939 and told them that they would be soon fighting in the regions where their fathers had shed so much blood.

Following the defeat of Poland the Leibstandarte recouped, retrained and expanded in Prague. Here in this photograph a soldier converses with a local woman. It was in the Czechoslovak capital that the SS soldiers received a welcoming reception, and were given leave.

On 10 May 1940 the Leibstandarte was once again embroiled in combat, this time against the Low Countries. In this photograph an SS anti-tank crew can be seen in action with a 7.5cm le.IG.18 gun.

A group of motorcyclists during a pause in their march. During the initial attack in Holland, the Leibstandarte formed part of the northern flank of the 227th Infantry Division's drive into the Dutch heartlands. There was almost no opposition at all along the frontier regions.

A PaK gun mounted on a half-track has halted in a field while its crew determine the position of the enemy. A couple of days into the attack against the Low Countries the Leibstandarte was posted from the 227th to the 9th Panzer Division and moved via Kleve and 's-Hertogenbosch.

Pioneers are seen trying to rebuild parts of a bridge that the enemy have destroyed. Along many of the canals the Dutch blew a number of bridges, but this did not hamper the Germans; they quickly improvised crossings using whatever they could muster.

The first of two photographs showing troops resting in a field. *Zeltbahn* waterproof capes have been adapted into tents to give the men some camouflage and protection.

The second of two photographs showing SS troops resting in a field. The *Zeltbahn* was part of the German Army standard dress equipment. The garment was water repellent and worn as a cape out in the field.

An SS-Untersturmführer (SS-second/junior storm leader) can be seen conversing with other officers during the advance through the Low Countries.

A motorcycle rider can be seen passing a burning building during operations on the Western Front in 1940. An officer can be seen being given a lift on the back of the motorcycle.

Soldiers on bicycles press 6-metre inflatable boats into service. Two paddles either side was normally sufficient for the boats to be propelled through the water, even when carrying a full complement of infantry on board with heavy weapons and equipment. Using inflatable boats was one of a number of methods to cross a river. They could be placed into operation much quicker than a pontoon bridge, and were less vulnerable to attack than a fixed bridge.

(**Above**) A 15cm s.FH18 howitzer on tow being moved to the front. This weapon was the standard piece in a division and employment of artillery was a necessity to any ground force engaging an enemy. They were popular weapons in both SS and German Army units.

(**Opposite, above**) Part of a battery troop in a field with their 10.5cm 1.FH18 field howitzer on a limber. The workhorse of the German artillery regiments was the 10.5cm I.FH18. The march through the Low Countries was swift and effective for the Germans. However, although the flat open terrain was regarded as good terrain for armour, much of the supplies had to rely on horse transport, which was often slow.

(**Opposite, below**) A s.IG33 infantry gun from an SS regiment's infantry gun company in an open field during summer operations in 1940. These offensive positions were found to be very effective against enemy targets, and thus the Germans could contain their foe for some considerable time.

One of the most vital requirements for an advancing army is its support lines. Here in this photograph is a vehicle support crew that helped maintain and service the armoured drive across Europe.

Two photographs showing the two-piece radio operators marching through a wooded area. The signalman is operating a portable radio (*Tornisterfunkgerät* or TornFu). This was the standard radio system used at battalion and regimental level. The radioman at the front is seen carrying the top half of the valve, while the other is signalling. These widely used portable radios were carried on specially designed back-pack frames, and when connected to each other (upper and lower valves) via special cables, could be used on the march, as in this photograph.

Bicycle unit during the campaign in the Low Countries. They are all wearing their standard issue water proof *Zeltbahnen*.

LSSAH troops climb into a rubber boat during operations in the Balkans in April 1941. The operation against Greece was launched on 6 April 1941. The LSSAH was to follow the route of the 9th Panzer Division, part of General der Panzertruppe Georg Stumme's XL Panzer Corps. The regiment crossed the border near Prilep and marched deep into Greek territory.

Chapter Three

Barbarossa 1941

When the Waffen-SS and their Wehrmacht counterparts ventured out across Russia when Operation Barbarossa was first unleashed, the Red Army were a complete enigma to them. There was little information supplied about the country which they were invading, nor was there anything substantial on the terrain and climate. These soldiers simply saw the Russians as Slavic people who were an inferior race. Propaganda had proved conclusively that all Russians were living in poverty and its antiquated army were totally unprepared for war. When units of the Leibstandarte SS rolled into Russian heartlands during the summer months of 1941, they were totally unaware of the immense undertaking they faced in defeating the enemy. Although the ordinary German found a huge contrast between his own country and that in which he was fighting, he had no concept of its vast size and the distances they would have to march. The soldiers were amazed by the immense forests, the huge expanses of marshland, and the many rivers that were continuously prone to flooding. They also found that the little information they did have was often incorrect. Maps frequently failed to show the roads. Moreover, when they were fortunate enough to come across a road, it was often in a terrible state of repair, and military traffic would render it almost impassable.

Nonetheless, here on the Eastern Front each SS soldier fought with tenacity, and looked upon himself as an elite fighter, superior to the average soldier of the German Heer. Every Leibstandarte soldier knew their good training, effective leadership, and first-class weapons made them a crack branch of Hitler's military elite.

For Barbarossa, the LSSAH was attached to III Panzer Corps and by August it was moved to be become part of XLVIII Panzer Corps. During this period it became involved in the Battle of Uman and the subsequent capture of Kiev.

After the successful victory at Kiev, in early September, the LSSAH was moved to the LIV Army Corps, as part of the 11th Army under Eugen Ritter von Schobert. An all-out thrust was made on the Dnieper River and a reconnaissance battalion was given the task of driving at speed to capture the strategically vital Perekop Isthmus. However, the soldiers were halted by fierce resistance in the town of Perekop.

In October the LSSAH was transferred back north to bolster the Romanian 3rd Army against Soviet attacks. This led to vicious fighting for the city of Rostov-on-Don, which was captured in late November. The LSSAH fought superbly and captured some 10,000 Soviet prisoners. However, by the end of the year, the German advance stalled across the entire Eastern Front as Russian resistance grew. Coupled with winter, much of the front became paralysed.

As arctic temperatures set in, both the Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht divisions endured their first Russian winter. Along the whole of the Eastern Front, amidst blizzards and temperatures below −40° Celsius, the Waffen-SS and Wehrmacht fought in chest-deep snow. It would not be until early the following year that the LSSAH could push forward deeper into Russia.

A light MG34 machine gunner and feeder well concealed wearing their summer camouflage smocks during enemy contact.

An 8cm Schwere 34 mortar crew in action. During the war the mortar had become the standard infantry support weapon, giving the soldier valuable high explosive capability beyond the range of rifles or grenades. One of its major drawbacks was its accuracy, it being an area weapon.

A flak gun positioned in a field during summer operations in the Soviet Union in 1941. This weapon was very effective and had a fire rate of 120–280 rounds per minute. This weapon is being used against a ground target.

In a trench during summer operations in Russia this soldier is armed with the Karabiner 98K bolt action rifle, which was a standard armament issued to both the Heer and Waffen-SS during the war. Note the stick grenade.

(**Opposite page**) An artillery observation post calculating the distance and range of the enemy, and then sending the coordinates back to artillery positions to launch bombardments.

(**Below**) On the march and SS troops, together with their regular army counterparts, advance deeper into the Soviet Union. In this photograph foot soldiers are about to cross a river.

R.Kr.31

(**Opposite, above**) Soldiers inside a wooded area during the early phase of the invasion of Russia. The Leibstandarte did not commit its forces to battle in the Soviet Union until the morning of 1 July 1941. Across the frontier in West Ukraine it combated Soviet tank units trying to cut the northern highway at Dubno and Olyka.

(**Opposite, below**) In a forward observation post observers deduce the location of the enemy with the use of scissor binoculars.

(**Above**) Well concealed machine gunners in undergrowth armed with a Czech ZB26 machine gun (MG26t). The weapon was used in the same role as the MG34 as a light machine gun. During the early part of the war, the ZB26 was used in large numbers by elements of the SS, who at first did not have full access to standard Wehrmacht supplies.

Troops take cover during action against an enemy target. While the LSSAH fought well during the early phases of the attack into Russia, fighting had been bitter against Red Army infantry. Russian replacements to cover the huge losses sustained quickly reached the battlefield and these replacements included the T34 tank.

Along a typical dirt road in the Ukraine near Uman. By the end of July 1941 German forces had surrounded the town of Uman and pocketed 100,000 Russian soldiers. The Leibstandarte had played a significant part in its capture.

SS PaK gunners near a burning building with their 7.5cm Ie.IG.18 infantry gun.

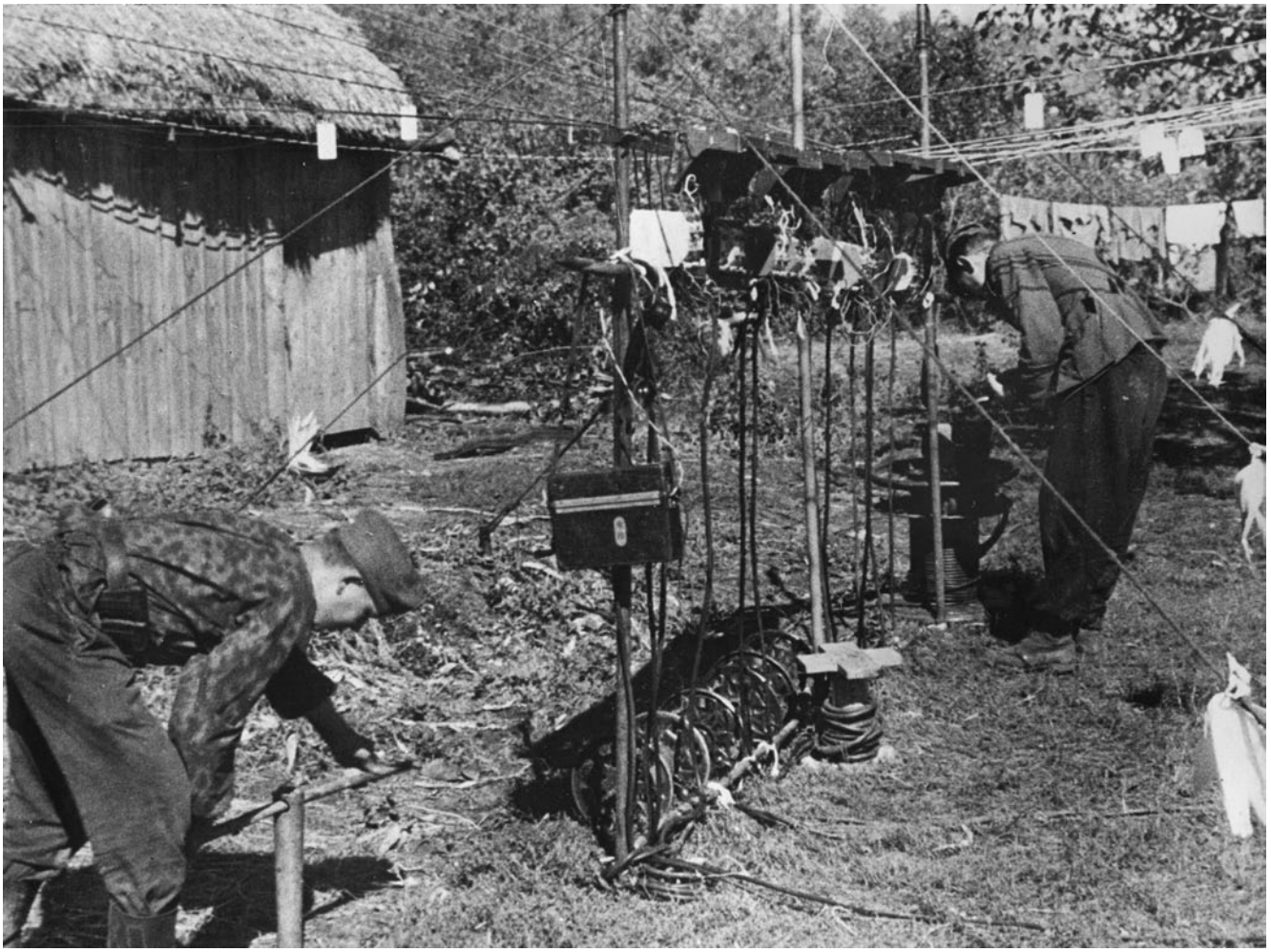
(**Above**) Russian soldiers have been taken prisoner. The SS man escorting the prisoner is armed with the MP38/40, and behind him an MG34 machine gunner follows.

(**Opposite page**) Two photographs in sequence showing an MG34 machine gun crew in action with a Dreibein 34 anti-aircraft tripod mount. Throughout the summer campaign and indeed for the rest of the war the MG34 had tremendous staying power against enemy infantry, and troops continuously deployed their machine guns in the most advantageous defensive and offensive positions.

A motorcyclist can be seen fixing the inner tube of his motorcycle tyre following a puncture. The often uneven and bad road surfaces of the Soviet Union made movement by motorcycle hard going, and consequently the motorcycles frequently developed mechanical problems, especially punctures.

(**Opposite, above**) A photograph showing a crude communications centre out in the field. Cable reels and cable can be seen interconnecting with the communication building, which would have housed signals.

(**Opposite, below**) A vehicle advances along the sandy terrain towing a 3.7cm PaK 35/36 gun. Much of the terrain in southern Russia was devoid of cover and clouds of dust did nothing to help conceal the march.



SS troops can be seen standing next to a Fieseler Fi 156 Storch. This aircraft was a small German liaison aircraft built by Fieseler.

A column of lightly camouflaged Horch Cross Country vehicles can be seen with commanding officers being transported from one part of the front to another. The vehicle is being supported by a single motorcycle.

Troops pose for the camera with their Horch Cross Country vehicle that has foliage attached to camouflage its distinctive shape from ground and aerial reconnaissance.

A shirtless solider is seen cooking on an open fire during a lull in the march in the late summer of 1941.

(**Opposite, above**) Troops advance along a road supported by the LSSAH StuG III battery. During the first half of the war the StuG was used primarily as a mobile, armoured light gun for direct-fire support for infantry.

(**Opposite, below**) An SS-Unterscharführer (SS junior section leader). Note that this section leader is wearing a gorget, which was worn by members of the Feldjägerkorps. The gorget made him instantly recognisable in the field.

(**Above**) A support vehicle crosses a heavy pontoon bridge known by the Germans as a Brückengerät B. In order to build this bridge, pontoon boats will have been lashed together and the bridging deck sections secured over them to allow traffic and soldiers on foot to pass over.

(**Opposite, above**) A photograph showing a s.IG33 howitzer being prepared for action. This infantry weapon was not intended for anti-tank use, but for destruction of strong points and clearing obstacles such as minefields and barbed wire entanglements.

(**Above**) SS troops pause in their march inside a forest on the Eastern Front.

(**Opposite, below**) An SS crew can be seen with their 7.5cm leichtes Infanteriegeschütz 18 (7.5cm le.IG.18). This infantry support gun was used extensively during the early part of the war in Russia.

A mortar crew with their 8cm sGrW34. Each battalion fielded six of these excellent mortars, which could fire fifteen bombs per minute to a range of 2,625 yards. Although effective during infantry fighting the mortar was not an accurate weapon. Generally it required several projectiles to achieve a direct hit on a target.

A soldier moves forward into action during intensive fighting on the Eastern Front. He is armed with a captured Soviet PPSh-41 machine gun, which was used universally in the Heer and Waffen-SS.

(**Opposite, above**) A photo of a 7.5cm le.IG.18 in a dug-in position. Note the gun crew around a table next to their weapon. This gun emerged at the start of the war as the first infantry gun to serve both the Heer and the Waffen-SS. However, by the time it saw its debut on the Eastern Front the German gunners soon realized how limited the weapon was on the front line.

(**Above**) The supply situation was exacerbated by the almost non-existence of proper roads throughout the Soviet Union. Movement was badly hampered, especially when it rained, and this generally slowed down wheeled vehicles almost to a crawl. Here in this photograph motorcycles and wheeled vehicles crawl towards the front.

(**Opposite, below**) Several 6-metre inflatable boats have been pressed into service by assault troops. These boats were capable of carrying more than two tons of cargo.

(**Above**) Infantry display some captured battlefield booty including the Soviet Maxim 1910 machine gun. The M1910 was mounted on a cumbersome wheeled mount with a gun shield. Two years later in 1943 it was replaced by the SG-43 Goryunov.

(**Opposite, above**) One of the most important elements for vehicles on the march was their maintenance support units which kept the vehicles in fighting condition.

(**Opposite, below**) An SS solider wearing his camouflage whites can be seen in a position on the Eastern Front during the winter of 1941. To blend in with the local terrain, front line troops began being supplied with winter whites.

SS troops in a wooden bunker are preparing for action against a Soviet target. The soldier on the left is looking through a pair of 6 × 30 Zeiss binoculars trying to establish the location of the enemy.

Two soldiers can be seen wearing crude winter white shirts over their standard army issue greatcoats. As the bitter temperatures dropped during late November and early December further attempts by the troops to improvise on their winter wear increased including the use of animal skin coats and captured Russian stocks of clothes which were often lined with fur.

A light MG34 machine gunner in the winter of 1941. The extreme first winter on the Eastern Front had caused the Germans serious delays. As a result much of the front stagnated until the spring thaw of 1942, delaying the conquest of Russia by months. The campaign in Russia had been a success in terms of the vast distances troops had travelled, but coupled with growing enemy resistance and the Russian winter, it had failed to achieve its objective.

In the depths of the first Russian winter, an SS observation post can be seen. A pair of scissor binoculars has been positioned from a well concealed bunker. Note the soldier in his camouflage whites in the distance and how well he blends in with the local terrain.

(**This and the following 2 pages**) Six photographs showing the variety of winter camouflage garments these SS men are wearing during the first winter on the Eastern Front. By November 1941 large batches of winter garments were hastily dispatched to front-line combat troops comprising a number of different styles of white, lightweight covers. There were snow shirts, two-piece snow suits, snow overalls, and the single-piece snow overall.

An MG34 gunner and his no. 2. Life in the line for these men was often a continuous grind. There was little respite – if the Red Army let up for a brief period, the sub-zero temperatures seldom did.

SS troops in the biting wind during the winter of 1941. To conceal their PaK 35/36 a white sheet has been draped on the front of the splinter shield.

Chapter Four

Kharkov and Beyond 1942–43

In January 1942, the military situation on the Eastern Front began as it had ended the year before, in thick snow, its front stagnated, and fighting off heavy Soviet counter-attacks. During winter operations the LSSAH and Army Group South had reluctantly fallen back from Rostov to defensive lines on the River Mius. Here its forces set up a defensive line and continued to fight against strong Russian attacks that often continued unabated for days and weeks on end.

After the spring thaw, the LSSAH was given its orders to join the southern offensive, Operation Blau, with its prime objective of retaking Rostov-on-Don. Exhausted and depleted of manpower and weaponry the LSSAH and its Wehrmacht counterparts continued pushing forward against heavy resistance. Casualties were high, but the resilience and determination of the German war machine led to the recapture of Rostov-on-Don in late July 1942. Badly depleted, the LSSAH was forced to pull out of line and the division ordered to Normandy for a rest and refit.

In northern France the division, licking its wounds from months of brutal combat, recuperated, was rearmed, and joined the newly formed SS Panzer Corps. The LSSAH was reformed as a Panzergrenadier Division.

Throughout the rest of 1942 the Leibstandarte spent its weeks and months refitting as a fully-fledged Panzergrenadier Division. By the end of 1942, the LSSAH had been transformed, with a full regiment of tanks instead of only a battalion. It also received nine Tiger IV tanks, and these formed part of the 13th (schwere) Company/ 1st SS Panzer Regiment.

By early 1943 the SS divisions in action on the Eastern Front had all been upgraded to full Panzer status. The Waffen-SS represented around five percent of the fighting strength of the Wehrmacht though more than a quarter of all Panzer divisions were Waffen-SS. The 'classic' SS divisions like 'Leibstandarte', 'Das Reich', 'Totenkopf' and 'Polizei', all played a significant part in the war on the Eastern Front. However, it was clear that these premier divisions were overstretched.

In February 1943, Hitler was determined to use his elite divisions to block the Red Army's drive past the strategically important city of Kharkov. The Soviets were

already intoxicated by their victory at Stalingrad, and the Führer was resolute not to allow Kharkov to fall into enemy hands. The task of carrying out the battle for Kharkov was left to the newly created 1 SS Panzer Corps under the LSSAH commander, SS-Obergruppenführer Paul 'Papa' Hausser. Hausser's SS Corps was ordered to fight to the death inside the rubble strewn city, but, after days of continuous combat, they had no choice but to evacuate Kharkov, much to the anger of Hitler.

On 4 March, determined to retake Kharkov, the 4th Panzer Army joined forces with the 1 SS Panzer Corps and launched a massive attack with the Das Reich division penetrating the outskirts of the city. To the north the Leibstandarte's Panzer Regiments I and II smashed their way into Kharkov. Fierce fighting ensured and as Soviet forces escaped onto the Kharkov–Belgorod road, Totenkopf troops were there ready to annihilate them.

The victory at Kharkov was now complete, but the capture of the city had come with a heavy price in blood: some 12,000 soldiers had been killed. With Kharkov retaken, Hitler now confidently planned a new offensive against the Kursk salient. Here Hitler was confronted with a tempting strategic opportunity that would, he predicted, deliver him victory.

On 5 July 1943, the 2 SS Panzer-Korps, which consisted of the Leibstandarte, Das Reich and Totenkopf Divisions, attacked in the pre-dawn light along the Kursk salient. The task of the SS Panzer-Korps was to advance via Beresov and Sadeynoye and smash through the first defensive belt. After this was achieved the next objective was to break through the second line of Russian positions between Lutchki and Jakovlevo, and once these were destroyed the advance would follow in a general north-easterly direction.

The Leibstandarte's first attack went well and their armour soon encircled enemy units that were destroyed with supporting grenadiers. The 9th Company of the Leibstandarte's 2 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment captured two hills west of Belgorod and took five fortified positions with explosive charges. By the evening of the first day of the attack, Totenkopf, Leibstandarte and Das Reich had done well and in some places penetrated some 13 miles into Russian defences.

Over the next few days the advance continued to go well with Totenkopf smashing its way through more than 30 miles of Russian line, while Leibstandarte and Das Reich were equally successful despite having to endure some bitter fighting because Soviet defensive positions were stronger than anticipated.

By 13 July, 2 SS Panzer Corps was unable to make any further progress and poor ground conditions were hampering its resupply efforts. Despite trying to batter their way through, SS troops had neither the strength nor resources to do so. The cream of the German panzer force, so carefully concentrated prior to the operation, was exhausted and the Russians had gained the initiative in the east.

The campaign in Russia would now consist of a series of German withdrawals with the Waffen-SS fanatically contesting every foot of the way. The SS divisions, the Leibstandarte, Das Reich and Totenkopf, had lost more than half of their vehicles and taken massive casualties (although the Red Army had lost even more). In the two-week battle the Red Army had lost 177,847 killed and injured and 2,586 tanks and self-propelled guns; the Leibstandarte had suffered 2,753 casualties including 474 killed, and 11 tanks.

As a result of the heavy losses the division was pulled out of line and shifted to Italy to help stabilise the deteriorating situation of the Allied invasion of Sicily, which began on the night of 9–10 July 1943.

In Italy the Leibstandarte was given the task of guarding a number of major important road and rail junctions in the area of Trento-Verona. After a couple of months, the division was moved to the Parma-Reggio area, where it was embroiled in heavy fighting with a number of partisans. When Italy announced its armistice with the Allies on 8 September 1943, the division was ordered to begin disarming nearby Italian units and fought several skirmishes around Cremona, Piacenza, and Parma. A few weeks later the Leibstandarte was sent to the Istria Peninsula where it fought several major operations against partisans.

During its operations in Italy, the Leibstandarte was reformed as a full panzer division, and redesignated as the 1st SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler.

While the division was being reformed, back on the Eastern Front the situation for the Waffen-SS had deteriorated in spite of its distinguished performance. Throughout the weeks that followed, the German front lines were pulled farther westwards, with SS units defending, attacking and counter-attacking as the situation demanded. Their new role as the so-called 'fire brigades', being shuttled from one danger spot to another to dampen down heavy Russian attacks, typified their position during late 1943. As a result of the deteriorating situation in the east, the division was ordered back to Russia, arriving in the Zhitomir area in mid-November.

(**Opposite, above**) A light machine gun troop (MG-Trupp) during winter operations in January 1943. The machine gun troop was ideally a three-man crew, but due to the high casualty rate sustained in Russia this was commonly reduced to only two. In the distance, part of a battery of StuG IIIs can be identified on the move.

(**Opposite, below**) German vehicles spread out across a frozen Russian field. A number of them are Sd.Kfz.251 armoured personnel carriers advancing towards the frontline. This was one of the quickest ways for troops to enter the forward edge of the battlefield.

(**Above**) Waffen-SS anti-tank gunners during an enemy contact in the snow in 1943. The PaK gun provided both the Waffen-SS and regular Heer with not only effective fire support but also defensive staying power as troops found themselves confronted everywhere by increasing numbers of enemy tanks.

(**Opposite, above**) Troops have been sent air supplies deep in Russian territory. Across much of the front, supply lines were overstretched and the German command was eager to get supplies to the premier SS divisions.

(**Opposite, below**) A column of support vehicles belonging to the Leibstandarte are seen here in the snow during operations on the Eastern Front.

(**This and the following 2 pages**) Six photographs showing SS infantry capturing Soviet soldiers. Russian soldiers were regarded by the SS as subhuman, and many were either murdered where they surrendered, left to die, or were transported directly to work or to concentration camps. Many hundreds of thousands of Soviet soldiers perished this way.

A Flammenwerfer 35, or FmW.35 (flame thrower), is being used to clear out a trench or bunker. This flamethrower could project fuel up to 25 metres. It weighed 35.8kg (79lbs), and held 11.8 litres of flaming oil and petrol mixed with tar to make it heavier to give it better range. It was ignited by a hydrogen torch providing approximately 10 seconds of continuous use.

Commanding officers tuck into some rations during a lull in the fighting. Note the long column of halted vehicles behind them.

(**Above**) During a pause in the march an SS infantryman relaxes, probably with his troop, and plays an accordion.

(**Opposite, above**) An SS light MG34 machine gunner and his no. 2. In this photograph, the MG34 gunner is about to fire his weapon on the bipod. Rifle groups generally had a light machine gun with a bipod, along with one or two spare barrels. A heavy machine gun group, however, had the bipod fitted machine gun, but additionally carried a tripod with optical sight.

(**Opposite, below**) Troops in a ditch wearing winter reversibles greyside out take cover before moving forward. In the distance a column of Pz.Kpfw.IVs can be seen on the march. Initially the Pz.Kpfw.IV was designed as an infantry support tank, but soon proved to be so adaptable and effective that it earned a unique tactical role on the battlefield. The Pz.Kpfw.IV was a credit to the Panzer divisions it served and was the only Panzer to stay in production throughout the war.

(**Opposite, above**) An SS PaK 38 crew well concealed in a deserted Russian village. The PaK 38 was one of the few early guns capable of penetrating through the thick armour of a T-34 tank. The gun was also equipped with Panzergranate 40 APCR shots in a drastic attempt to knockout the heavier KV-1 tanks.

(**Above**) SS infantry use armour as support during the Leibstandarte attack in the battle of Kursk in July 1943. In June 1943, there were 21 Panzer divisions, including 4 Waffen-SS divisions and 2 Panzergrenadier divisions being prepared for Operation Zitadelle in the Kursk salient. For this massive attack the Panzerwaffe was able to muster, in early July, 17 divisions and 2 brigades with no less than 1,715 Panzers and 147 Sturmegeschütz III (StuG) assault guns. Each division averaged some 98 Panzers and self-propelled anti-tank guns. The new Pz.Kpfw.V 'Panther' Ausf.A made its debut, despite its production problems.

(**Opposite, below**) A light MG42 machine gunner can be seen in a captured Soviet position. In the distance is a knocked-out T-34 tank. The battle of the Kursk salient was probably the first modern Soviet operation of the war. Despite their inferior weapons, the Red Army had a well-prepared defensive programme, which included elaborate deception plans to confuse the enemy.

A long column of vehicles including SS infantry on foot during the initial stages of the battle of Kursk. By 7 July the advance of the SS seemed promising. The SS Totenkopf division had managed to smash its way through more than 30 miles of Russian line, and the Leibstandarte and Das Reich were equally successful despite enduring bitter fighting.

(**Opposite page**) A commander scans the terrain with his 6 × 30 binoculars while standing inside a field in July 1943. Prior to the troops moving off to their jump off assembly points it was imperative that their commanders knew the precise location of their enemy.

(**Below**) Soviet infantry surrender during the early stages of the Kursk offensive. During the first days of the attack both Heer and their Waffen-SS counterparts progressed well against stiff Red Army resistance.

(**Above**) An SS infantryman stands next to one of the many bunker installations across the Kursk salient. In front of the German positions the Soviets, after months of preparation, were waiting and ready, sitting in their bunkers and numerous other well-dug-in positions for the first sign of attack.

(**Opposite, above**) SS PaK crews during a training exercise with their 7.5cm PaK 40s. The deadly PaK 40 had a spaced-armour shield which was held together by large bolts. These bolts had drilled holes that allowed the crews to thread foliage through them and conceal the weapon on the battlefield. The PaK 40 gun proved its worth in Russia and was more than capable of disabling heavy Soviet tanks.

(**Opposite, below**) An SS man poses for the camera on the front of his Sd.Kfz.251 during the campaign in Italy in 1943. Note the Leibstandarte insignia painted on the front of the vehicle. As a result of heavy losses, the LSSAH was pulled out of the line and shifted to Italy to help stabilise the deteriorating situation of the Allied invasion of Sicily, which began on the night of 9–10 July 1943. In Italy the Leibstandarte was given the task of guarding a number of major important road and rail junctions in the area of Trento-Verona. After a couple of months the division was moved to the Parma-Reggio area where it was embroiled in heavy fighting with a number of partisans.

Two commanders walk along a dusty road during operations in Italy. When Italy announced its armistice with the Allies on 8 September 1943, the division was ordered to begin disarming nearby Italian units and fought a number of skirmishes around Cremona, Piacenza, and Parma. A few weeks later the Leibstandarte was sent to the Istria Peninsula where it fought in anti-partisan operations.

(**Opposite, above**) In a forward observation post a soldier can be seen with his 6 × 30 Sf.14Z scissor periscope to search for, detect, plot, and determine the direction to targets. It was quite common for the battery chief to operate the observation post. Note the small amount of foliage around the periscope, providing just enough concealment to break up its shape.

(**Opposite, below**) A motorcycle combination has evidently developed a mechanical problem and a mechanic can be seen with the rider and the commanding officer, who is evidently a passenger. Note the Leibstandarte insignia painted on the side of the side car.

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(**Opposite, above**) Motorcyclists could be found in every unit of an infantry and Panzer division, especially during the early part of the war. They were even incorporated in the divisional staffs, which included a motorcycle messenger platoon. It is evident from this photograph that the motorcyclist is a messenger.

(**Opposite, below**) A column of Horch vehicles in an Italian town in September 1943. By 19 September, all Italian forces in the Po River Plain had been disarmed, but reports confirmed that the Italian 4th Army was still a threat in the region around Piedmont and as a consequence SS-Sturmbannführer Peiper's 2nd SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment was sent to confront and disarm these units.

(**Above**) Two commanders on motorcycle combinations during operations in Italy in the late summer of 1943.

Chapter Five

The Last Year 1944–45

In spite of their best efforts, nothing could mask the fact that the German war machine was dwarfed by the Red Army. Although the Waffen-SS had shown their courage in the face of overwhelming strength and stood firm against almost impossible odds, they were fully aware of the dire significance of losing more ground to the enemy. Along the front at Zhitomir the Leibstandarte formed part of the XLVIII Panzer Corps, which was part of the 4th Panzer Army. Here SS soldiers fought a number of bloody actions before moving to the Cherkassy area at the end of January where they were assigned to the III Panzer Corps, part of 1st Panzer Army.

In the Korsun pocket, where 56,000 German troops were trapped, the Leibstandarte, and remnants of III Panzer Corps and XLVII Panzer Corps, were ordered to attempt to break the Soviet cordon and rescue the trapped soldiers inside. What followed was the Battle of the Korsun Pocket, with SS troops trying in vain to relieve the regular German soldiers attempting to battle their way out of the encirclement. By 16 February what was left of Gruppe Stemmermann's men inside the smouldering pocket, escaped. Though successful, it was a hollow victory for the Germans.

While the Heer forces in the area licked their wounds and attempted to regroup, the bulk of the Leibstandarte were pulled out of the line and transported hastily to Belgium for a rest and refit. The remaining parts of the division on the Eastern Front fought a number of battles that saw its Kampfgruppe, together with the 1st Panzer Army, become encircled in the Kamenets-Podolsky pocket.

The Leibstandarte fought superbly inside the pocket, and one of the Kampfgruppen proceeded to form part of the spearhead which linked up with the 2 SS Panzer Corps near Buczacz on 6 April to break out.

Although the first half of 1944 had been a period of disasters for the German forces on the Eastern Front, the Leibstandarte had shown their courage in the face of overwhelming strength and stood firm against almost impossible odds. The Korsun and then the Kamenets-Podolsky pockets were two battles that stood as examples where the SS soldier had made sacrifice after sacrifice, often successfully holding the line to allow other units to escape.

By the summer of 1944 the SS were fully aware that the Red Army had only been delayed, not halted. As both the southern and northern fronts withdrew and tried their best to stabilise their precarious defences against a growing enemy force, another looming threat, this time in Western Europe, began to seriously concern the German command. For Hitler, it would once again be the Waffen-SS divisions that he looked upon to save the desperate situation.

Already by the end of April 1944, the LSSAH Division had been reformed in Belgium and was at full strength. As further encrypted messages came through about an impending Allied invasion of Northern France, the division was transferred again as part of the 1 SS Panzer Corps, which consisted of the 101 SS Heavy Panzer Battalion, Hitlerjugend, 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division 'Götz von Berlichingen', and the Panzer Lehr Division. Soldiers of the Leibstandarte were moved north of the River Seine to prepare for any possible landing in the area of the Pas de Calais.

When the Allied invasion finally landed on the shores of Normandy, the LSSAH were in the area around Calais. It was not until early July that the division arrived in Normandy to meet the developing threat. By 11 July the 12th SS Panzer Division 'Hitlerjugend' was relieved by the Leibstandarte division, which took command of two units that remained in action. For nearly a week, soldiers of the Leibstandarte battled in the Caen region in a desperate attempt to stem the advancing Allies. During the battle, SS grenadiers fought a desperate close-quarter action which saw both sides sustaining terrible casualties.

All over the Normandy sector the Waffen-SS divisions continued desperately to try to keep the Allies in check. The Norman countryside had created conditions that favoured the SS grenadiers. Clusters of trees, tall hedges, ditches, and lack of roads frustrated the Allied armoured units seeking to destroy enemy tanks in open areas. Aided by this terrain, the SS were able to defend positions longer than the Allies had expected, and as a result exacted huge casualties. Frequently the Allies watched their irrepressible foe come under a furious bombardment of mortar and shellfire, and still they held their ground. However, the savage Allied air attacks and naval bombardments gradually began to grind down the German defences. Movement was almost impossible by daylight, and any vehicles that travelled during the day were attacked and destroyed.

By the end of the first week of August both the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS divisions were fighting for survival. Corps and divisions remained in action on paper, but were becoming a small collection of small battles, shrinking down to battalion size. A catastrophe now threatened the whole area as the Americans began to break out and the Normandy campaign became mobile. To save the German forces in Normandy from being completely encircled and destroyed a series of rapid withdrawals were undertaken through the Falaise-Argentan gap. On 16 August German forces continued retreating and crossed the River Orne. The bulk of the German

armour had consequently become trapped inside the pocket at Falaise and fought a desperate battle to escape the impending slaughter. By 21 August the terrible fighting in what became famously known as the Battle of the Falaise Pocket drew to a catastrophic conclusion. The Waffen-SS had been dealt a heavy blow.

The Normandy campaign had been very costly for the Waffen-SS, with many of its elite units being annihilated. Following the LSSAH defeat in France, remnants of its weary force limped east for rest and refitting in Aachen.

While the Leibstandarte was recuperating, plans were already being made for the division to be part of a massive Western Front offensive. Hitler had decided to launch a great winter counter-attack in the west. The attack would be through the Ardennes – the scene of his great 1940 victory – and capture the town of Antwerp. 'Fog, night, and snow', would be on his side. With Antwerp in German hands, he predicted the British and Americans would have no port from which to escape; but this time the enemy would not be allowed to escape.

Here in the Ardennes a substantial number of divisions were assigned to the area, including four crack Waffen-SS divisions: Leibstandarte, Das Reich, Hohenstaufen, and the Hitlerjugend. These SS divisions were larger than the regular Wehrmacht Panzer divisions, and totalled a ground strength of between 16,000 and 20,000 soldiers, with three-battalion Panzergrenadier regiments, a slightly larger artillery regiment that included a battalion of Nebelwerfers (rocket mortars), and a Sturmgeschütz Abteilung with twenty or thirty assault guns. The SS also had a higher allocation of motor vehicles. However, they were still below their assigned strength for officers and non-commissioned officers, mostly because of the terrible losses sustained in Normandy.

There were four heavy Panzerjäger battalions, nominally equipped with a mix of Jagdpanthers, Panzerjäger IVs, and Sturmgeschütz IIIs. The heavy Panzer battalions contained the famous Tiger heavy tanks. Three of these units were committed in the Ardennes and the 501st SS was attached to the Leibstandarte. The lead element of the 501st SS Schwere Panzer Abteilung was commanded by the veteran armoured ace Obersturmbannführer Joachim Peiper, commander of the 1.SS.Panzer-Regiment.

For the attack in the Ardennes, the Waffen-SS was assigned for action with the 6th Panzer Army, which was to deliver the decisive blow. It was commanded by Oberstgruppenführer Josef 'Sepp' Dietrich, who had fought brilliantly on the Eastern Front and commanded the 1.SS.Panzer Corps, comprising of the 1st and 12th SS Panzer divisions in the Normandy Campaign. The 6th Panzer Army contained all the four SS Panzer divisions and was given the task of tearing holes in the American lines between the Losheim Gap and Monschau.

The offensive was launched on 16 December 1944. It was a complete surprise for the Allies and the first week was a success for the Germans. But it soon faltered and by 22 December the Americans had begun to stem the German drive. Due to lack of

fuel and congestion on the narrow roads many German units were brought to a standstill. The fuel shortages were so bad that on 23 December Peiper's Kampfgruppe destroyed their vehicles and his remaining 1,000 men set out on foot for the German lines. The remnants of the Kampfgruppe then linked up with the Leibstandarte just before dawn on Christmas day.

Over the next couple of weeks heavy fighting continued to rage, and by 8 January 1945, with more than 100,000 Germans dead on the battlefield, Hitler grudgingly ordered the remnants of the forward units to fall back to a line running south from the village of Dochamps, in the Samrée/Baraque de Fraiture area, to Longchamps, 5 miles north of Bastogne. Even more significant were orders for the elite SS Panzer divisions to go on the defensive. The 6 SS Panzer Army was withdrawn into reserve under Hitler's personal command, and he also called back the remnants of his foremost fighting machine, the Leibstandarte, from the Bastogne area. Tanks coming off the assembly lines were diverted from the Ardennes back to the Eastern Front, and there were no more propaganda broadcasts in Germany about the 'historic offensive'.

By 24 January all four Waffen-SS divisions that were initially committed to the Ardennes campaign were withdrawn and ordered to Hungary in a drastic attempt to throw the Red Army back across the Danube and to relieve the capital, Budapest. As for the remaining forces in the Ardennes sector, they were withdrawn and the remaining units were back over the Rhine by 10 February, preparing to fight the last battle of the Reich. Here in Hungary the last major offensive of the war, 'Spring Awakening', was launched. However, the overwhelming numerical superiority of the Soviets made any defence impossible, despite Hitler demanding victory at all costs.

The situation was dire. Nothing could hold back the Russian forces and Hitler was incensed by the Leibstandarte for what he saw as their failure. As a consequence of this, he issued an 'armband order' to Sepp Dietrich. Hitler claimed that Dietrich's troops 'did not fight as the situation demanded' and, as a mark of disgrace, he ordered the Waffen-SS units involved to remove their cuff titles. In fact, for security reasons, these had already been removed by the troops during Spring Awakening.

By the end of February 1945, the Russians had pushed their way through the Vértes mountains across three major rivers and had smashed the German formations opposing them. With massed armour accompanied by swarms of low-flying aircraft and dense waves of infantry, the speed at which the Russians conducted their operations in Hungary must have reminded the German commanders of the old days of Blitzkrieg.

By 2 April the Russians had reached the Neusiedler Lake, on the border between Hungary and Austria, and two days later the last German defenders had been finally driven out of Hungary. Of the Waffen-SS divisions that had fought in Hungary, the bulk of them withdrew into Austria to defend Vienna. The Leibstandarte now formed

two Kampfgruppen, and they held a line running from Vienna to Wiener Neustadt. Das Reich was also put into line to defend Vienna, before withdrawing into the city and becoming involved in bitter fighting. Totenkopf too fought a defensive battle around the Austrian capital, while the Hitlerjugend withdrew into strong defensive positions around the Wienerwald to the south west of the city. As for the Hohenstaufen, they were badly smashed during the battle around Vienna, and its pitiful remnants limped westwards to the American lines.

All of the SS divisions put up largely symbolic resistance to the two huge Soviet fronts converging on the city. Although there were appeals that Vienna should be held at all costs, Dietrich decided to withdraw his men to the west rather than face a massacre. On 13 April, the Red Army marched into the city. What was left of Heer and Waffen-SS forces withdrew across into Germany.

The last battles that were fought by remnants of the Leibstandarte were around the city of Berlin. The LSSAH ended its days defending a losing battle around the bombed and blasted capital. On 23 April 1945, Hitler appointed Brigadeführer Mohnke the commander for the central government district that included the Reich Chancellery and the Führerbunker. He formed Kampfgruppe Mohnke, which was divided into two weak regiments each made up of approximately 2,000 men. The core group of his fighting men were the 800 of the Leibstandarte Guard Battalion which were assigned to guard the Führer in his last days.

For the next week, the battle for Berlin raged. True to their motto, 'My Honour is my Loyalty', the Waffen-SS were seen fighting bitterly around the Reich Chancellery. Even as the last hours were fought out in the fiery cauldron of Berlin, LSSAH units, lacking in all provisions including many types of weapons, effectively halted and stemmed a number of Russian assaults. However, these were isolated successes, and gradually the soldiers were either captured or killed. Those troops of the Leibstandarte that managed to escape Berlin surrendered to the American forces at Steyr in Austria along with the remnants of Hohenstaufen.

Although by early May 1945, the Leibstandarte was all but destroyed, in the eyes of the men that marched into captivity, they had laid down their arms in the sound knowledge that no military formation in history had achieved more. They had battled across half Russia, they had shown their skill and endurance at Kursk and Kharkov, and gone on to protect the withdrawals of the rest of the German Army to the very gates of Berlin and beyond. Nobody could deny that these men, in their brief and extraordinary existence, had won a reputation for their skill and gallantry in combat. Throughout the war each LASSAH soldier had looked upon himself as part of an elite fighting machine that was superior to any other in the German Army. Even in defeat, as many frightened and dispirited troops shuffled off to the prisoner-of-war camps, the SS soldier of the Leibstandarte remained arrogant and defiant to the end.

Taken in late 1943 during operations around Vinnitsa, the man driving the Schwimmwagen is SS-Hauptsturmführer Gustav Knittel, commander of the 1st SS Aufklärungs Abteilung LSSAH. In the background are two Pz.Kpfw.V Panther Ausf.A of I Abteilung/SS Panzer Regiment 1/1 SS Panzer Division LSSAH.

Soldiers of the LSSAH struggle moving a Volkswagen Kübelwagen through the mire during operations outside Vinnitsa in late 1943. It would only take a short downpour of rain to turn a dry road into a quagmire, making movement for horses and wheeled transport difficult.

(**Opposite, above**) Pz.Kpfw.VI Tigers of 1 SS Panzer Division LSSAH during operations in Vinnitsa in late 1943. Due to the deteriorating situation on the Eastern Front the Leibstandarte were ordered back and arrived in the region of Zhitomir in mid-November.

(**Opposite, below**) A column of Sd.Kfz.251 halftracks on a road in southern Russia in late 1943. The halftrack was a vital component to the conduct of operations on the Eastern Front. It carried infantry alongside the advancing panzers, it brought machine guns, mortars, boxes of ammunition and supplies, and it towed anti-tank guns, light anti-aircraft guns, howitzers and pontoon bridge sections to the forefront of the battlefield.

(**Above**) LSSAH troops being supported by a Marder during operations in late 1943. The Marder was more of a gun carriage than a proper Panzerjäger (Panzer hunter) that could exchange shells with enemy tanks. Nevertheless, it did sterling service for the Heer and the Waffen-SS.

Leibstandarte grenadiers clad in their winter whites supported by a column of Pz.Kpfw.IVs during the early winter of 1944 on the Eastern Front.

LSSAH troops hitch a lift on board a StuG.III in early 1944. This armoured tracked mobile gun was thought to be the best solution to the problem of providing close artillery support to the advancing infantry. Its primary task was to keep pace with the mechanized infantry, afford the gunners a degree of armoured protection, and provide support on the battlefield at short notice.

(**This and the following 2 pages**) Five photographs show SS troops training with the MG34 and MG42 in a light role on a bipod. Out in the field, rifle groups generally had a light machine gun with a bipod, along with one or two spare barrels. A heavy machine gun group, however, had the bipod fitted machine gun, but additionally carried a tripod with optical sight.

(**Left and the following 2 pages**) Four photographs showing SS recruits during a training exercise. All the men are wearing the Waffen-SS dot tunic. The 44-dot uniforms were issued to all Waffen-SS units and were worn concurrently or in conjunction with the earlier smocks and helmet covers. The outfit consisted of a tunic and trouser, very similar in pattern to the M43 wool uniform. The camouflage pattern was dubbed 'Erbsenmuster' (Peas pattern) and was meant to be used in all seasons, dispensing with the need for the reversible uniforms. They were worn both on their own, or over the wool uniform. They were mass produced between 1943 and 1944.

A photograph showing rifle infantry with their 98K bolt action carbines during a training exercise. The SS troops are all wearing 44-dot tunics. This new uniform was produced on both herringbone twill and cotton twill fabric. Numerous shade variations existed, though this was a factor of erratic printing quality rather than any intentional alterations to the pattern.

Another photograph showing rifle infantry with their 98K bolt action carbines during a training exercise.

(**Below and the facing page**) Three photographs showing SS troops cleaning the their 98K carbines. Recruits had to keep their weapons clean at all times to ensure they were in good working order out in the field.

(**Left and the facing page**) Three photographs showing SS troops cleaning parts of the 15cm s.IG33 howitzer during a training exercise. While the s.IG33 was a reliable and robust weapon, it was rather heavy for an infantry gun. Nonetheless it was used with great success, especially during the early part of the war in Russia.

(**Below and the following page**) SS troops cleaning parts of the PaK 7.5cm I.IG.18. In the field this weapon was used in direct infantry support. The gun was very versatile in combat and the crew often aggressively positioned it, which meant the piece was often exposed on the battlefield. A typical infantry regiment controlled three infantry battalions, an infantry gun company with six 7.5cm I.IG.18 and two 15cm s.IG.33 guns, and an anti-tank company with twelve 3.7cm PaK 35/36 guns.

Three photographs taken in sequence showing an LSSAH howitzer crew during a fire mission against an enemy target. The 15cm field howitzer was designed to attack targets deeper into the enemy rear, such as command posts, reserve units, assembly areas and logistics facilities. Due to the difficulties of moving these weapons, they were often mounted onto vehicles like the Hummel.

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(**Opposite, above**) LSSAH with their 8.8cm Flak gun being used against a ground target. Note the observer estimating the range of the target using a 6 × 30 Sf 14Z Scherenfernrohr (scissor binoculars) on a tripod mount. Observers looked for anything they could to detect and locate their enemy, such as weapon muzzles, slight movements, fires, or smoke from cooking.

(**Opposite, below**) A Tiger 222 towing a Tiger 231 of 503 Heavy Panzer Battalion (s.Pz.Abt.503) after it broke down in June 1944 in Normandy.

(**Above**) A Tiger crew with their well camouflaged vehicle during operations in Normandy in June 1944. Extensive foliage has been applied to conceal it from ground and aerial observation.

At a command post an NCO can be seen conferring with two soldiers, the one on the right holding the rank of SS-Obersturmbannführer and the other, SS-Untersturmführer.

(**Opposite page**) Two SS soldiers are conferring. One is armed with the Panzerfaust. During the last year of the war the Panzerfaust was used extensively to combat Russian armour. It was a hand-held rocket-propelled grenade, effective at a maximum range of about 200 feet.

A prime mover mounting a 3.7cm Flak gun moving towards the front. On tow is an Sd.Ah.56 ammunition trailer. This weapon was often used in conjunction with light flak to protect important military installations.

(**Opposite, above**) Winter-clad SS grenadiers have hitched lifts onboard Sd.Kfz.251 halftracks in early 1945. These armoured personnel carriers were the most effective method of transportation for troops to reach the front lines without having to march many miles on foot, and then to set up positions and fight.

(**Opposite, below**) A camouflaged 8.8cm Flak gun protecting a roadway in early 1945. Note the gun's limber positioned nearby. Limbers were normally positioned like this so that the crews could rapidly limber up and reposition the gun.

(**Above**) Waffen-SS troops inside Buda Castle in Hungary, February 1945. Buda Castle was the last stronghold held by German and Hungarian forces during the Siege of Budapest that lasted between 29 December 1944 and 13 February 1945. The siege by Soviet forces was one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the war.

Troops are equipped with the 8cm sGrW34 mortar in a dugout. Initially each battalion fielded some six of these ecellent mortars, which could fire fifteen projectiles a minute to a range of 2,400 metres. During long periods of action the mortar would be fired from dug-in positions where the crew could be protected from enemy fire.

Appendix One

SS Infantryman 1939–1942

With the onset of war in 1939, the clothing worn by the combat units of the Allgemeine SS (General SS) soldier had changed little from the assault divisions of 1918. The bulk of their supply and transport units were still drawn by animals. The standard infantry rifle had basically not been changed since the war in the trenches. But their machine guns, notably the MG34, and mortars were far superior to anything the enemy could muster. The artillery had changed little except that of the 10.5cm field howitzer, which had replaced the 7.7cm 18 infantry gun. Communication too was vastly superior to that of the enemy.

The SS infantryman was very well equipped, perhaps in 1939 the best equipped in the world. The rifleman, or *Schütze*, wore the trademark model-1935 steel helmet, which provided protection while marching to the battlefront and during combat. What distinguished the SS infantryman's helmet from a regular Heer soldier was an 'SS' decal transfer applied to the side of his helmet. Before 1935 many of the SS helmets had insignia that was hand-painted or applied using fine stencils.

Before the war, the LSSAH and SS-VT had adopted a closed-collar *feldgrau* (field grey, or grey-green) field uniform for combat wear, which became the standard uniform during the war of what would soon become the Waffen-SS. This *Feldanzug* (field suit) was very similar to the Model 1936 Army field uniform, however the SS version had a wider collar in feldgrau rather than the Heer standard bottle-green tunic. The SS M36 tunic had a dark green collar, scalloped pockets and internal belt suspenders and was produced between 1935 and 1941. Stitched on the right collar with black sewn fabric was an 'SS' rune in white material. On the other collar was the soldier's rank, also stitched in white on a black sewn fabric backing.

The next variation in tunic style worn by the SS infantryman was the M40/41 pattern tunic. This tunic had a field grey collar. The M41 was actually an M40 with a six-button front, and often a rayon lining. This tunic was produced between 1938 and 1941.

A year later the M42 tunic was introduced. The tunic pocket pleats were eliminated, lining was manufactured in satin instead of cotton twill, and internal suspenders

eliminated. Worn with the SS uniform during the early war years, it was the standard German Army kit.

Worn around this tunic was a leather belt, with support straps which carried two sets of three ammunition pouches for a total of sixty rounds for his carbine. The soldier also wore his combat harness for his mess kit and a special camouflage rain cape or *Zeltbahn*. He also wore an entrenching tool, and attached to the entrenching tool carrier was the bayonet, a bread bag for rations, gas mask canister (which was invariably slung over the wearers shoulder) and an anti-gas cape in its pouch attached to the shoulder strap. The infantryman's flashlight was normally attached to the tunic, and inside the tunic pocket he carried wound dressings. A small backpack was issued to the soldiers, though some did not wear them. The backpack was intended for spare clothing, personal items, and additional rations along with a spare clothing satchel.

The weapons used by the early SS soldier varied, but the standard issue piece of equipment was the 7.92mm Kar98k carbine. This excellent, modern and effective bolt-action rifle was of Mauser design. It remained the most popular weapon used by both the SS and the Heer throughout the war. Another weapon used by the SS, but to a lesser extent than the Kar98k, was the 9mm MP38 or MP40 machine pistol. This sub-machine gun was undoubtedly one of the most effective weapons ever produced for the German soldier. The 7.92mm MG34 light machine gun was yet another weapon that featured heavily within the ranks of the SS. The effectiveness of the weapon made it the best machine gun ever produced at that time. The MG34 and later the MG42 had an impressive fire rate and could dominate the battlefield both in defensive and offensive roles. By 1941 the SS possessed the MG34 in every rifle group, and machine gun crews were able to transport this relatively light weapon easily onto the battlefield by resting it over the shoulder. Yet other weapons, seen at both company and battalion level on the battlefield, were the 5cm 1.GrW36 light mortar and the 8cm s.GrW34 heavy mortar. Although they could both be effective weapons when fired accurately, they were too heavy and too expensive to produce on a large scale.

At regimental and divisional level, the SS possessed its own artillery in the form of 7.5cm 1.IG18, 10.5cm I.FH18, 15cm s.FH18, and 15cm s.IG33 infantry guns. Specially trained artillery crews used these guns and they were seen extensively on the Western Front, in the Balkans, and during the first two years of war in Russia. The 3.7cm PaK 35/36 was another weapon that was very popular especially during the early years of the war. However by the time the German invasion of Russia was unleashed Panzerjäger crews soon became aware of the tactical limitations of the weapon.

Appendix Two

Combat Uniforms of the Waffen-SS 1943–45

This section is not intended to be a definitive reference to the combat uniforms worn by all the Waffen-SS divisions that saw active service during the latter half of the war, but simply to supply the reader with the general uniforms seen on the battle front between 1943 and 1945.

Tunics

The Waffen-SS service uniforms worn between 1943 and 1945 were generally designed in the typical army pattern M1940 tunic. They were field grey in colour and manufactured from wool/rayon mixed material. They had four box-pleated patch pockets. The collar patches displayed the typical wartime machine-embroidered runes or insignia of the attached division. The shoulder straps were piped in a number of colours depending on rank. On the left sleeve was the standard machine-embroidered eagle and chevron displaying rank. The most prominent piece of insignia was the cuff title worn by all premier SS formations. Non-German volunteer SS divisions wore tunics that varied considerably in quality. The design of the tunic was almost universal, but the volunteers, presumably to retain the individual soldier's national pride, normally wore the divisional emblem patch on the right collar together with the national arm shield and the cuff title.

Camouflage Smocks and Uniforms

The Waffen-SS were the first soldiers in the world to be issued with camouflage clothing on a large scale. These camouflage printed uniforms became as much the hallmark of the Waffen-SS as the runes worn on their collars. The patterns, however, were quite varied and as a consequence a multitude of camouflage patterns were developed. The camouflage jacket was a very popular piece of uniform and was supposed to be worn over the wool service uniform and the field equipment. This loose fitting reversible smock, made from a high quality water-repellent cotton duck material, was usually screen-printed on one side in a spring/summer colour scheme, with the reverse showing autumn/winter colours. From 1943 onwards the

camouflage patterns varied considerably, from the early type 1940 oak leaf camouflage smock, to the M1942 second type oak leaf and palm tree camouflage smocks, to the M1943 'pea' pattern drill camouflage uniform, to the M1944 pea pattern camouflage drill uniform. It was not uncommon to see Waffen-SS soldiers wearing a combination of the M1943 drill and M1944 herringbone twill camouflage uniforms. The difference in colours was quite apparent between the predominately ochre yellow 1943 jacket or trousers and the pinkish brown hue of the 1944 trousers or jacket.

Another item of camouflage clothing worn by the Waffen-SS during the war was the M1937-style camouflage tunic. It was made of herringbone twill, printed with 'pea' pattern camouflage and resembled the classic M37 tunic, since it had pleated breast pockets with flaps lined with artificial silk.

In 1944, the camouflage blouse was introduced. This waist-length blouse roughly resembled the M1944 *Feldbluse* or the British battledress blouse in cut, though with open patch pockets. It was made from *Zeltbahn* material, with autumn colours on the outside, but was not reversible.

Winter Uniforms

The most universal item of winter clothing worn by the Waffen-SS was the two-piece snowsuit. This shapeless two-piece snowsuit, consisting of a white jacket and white trousers, was especially worn by the SS volunteer combat formations.

Another form of white snow camouflage clothing was the long overall coat, which buttoned right down the front of the garment. Large and shapeless, it was worn without a belt over any uniform and all equipment. However, the snowsuit tended to restrict the wearer's freedom of movement and was unpopular by late 1943.

One of the most popular items of clothing was the reversible padded winter uniform, worn by Heer and Waffen-SS soldiers in the later war years. This padded grey/white suit was produced in the winter of 1942/43 and was the first truly reversible cold weather uniform, offering both concealment and extra warmth, to become available to the troops on the Eastern Front in large numbers. Originally in grey-green, the SS had them produced in a darker steel grey colour.

Another garment worn by the SS in the later war period was the Italian fur-lined, padded over-jacket, made from captured Italian camouflage material in 1944. The jacket was made large enough to be worn over the field equipment, so that a soldier's weapons and ammunition could also be kept warm in extreme arctic conditions. In the cold weather the hood could be easily tightened around the head and helmet.

Panzer Uniform

The most common armoured uniform worn by the Panzer units of the Waffen-SS was the special black armoured crew uniform. The SS Panzer uniforms varied from those of the Army version, consisting of small and more rounded lapels and lacked the pink upper lapel piping initially worn by all army ranks. The black uniform was a

practical garment for all types of duty and was still seen in 1943 when camouflage clothing specifically for armoured crews was introduced.

The armoured crewman's camouflage overalls were designed entirely for concealment when the crewman was away from his vehicle. The overall was reversible with autumn browns inside, and a green oak leaf type pattern for the spring and summer.

Another popular variation of the armoured uniform was the reed-green two-piece garment. However by January 1944 it was decided to replace it with a two-piece printed 'pea' pattern camouflage version. There were three slightly different models manufactured, but the cut did not vary.

Assault Gun Uniform

When designing the uniform for crews of tank destroyers and self-propelled assault guns serving in the Panzer and Panzergrenadier divisions, the Germans decided on using the same style and practical cut of the black Panzer uniform to produce a new version, known as the self-propelled gun crew uniform. This special uniform was made entirely of field grey cloth with all the details of cut and design the same as those of the black Panzer uniform. However the uniform did differ in respect of the SS collar insignia.

Another variation of the assault gun uniform, but introduced in the later part of the war, was the 'pea' style herringbone camouflage jacket with pointed lapels.

Steel Helmet

The most distinctive universal headgear issued to the Waffen-SS was the steel helmet. In particular during the second half of the war the SS wore three major models, the basic M1935, the M1940, and finally the M1942 pattern. By 1943 most of the steel helmets were covered with camouflage cloth that was held on by an envelope of material that slipped over the peak and by three small sprung clips, one either side and one at the rear. The fabric, normally matching the camouflage smock, was printed on both sides in contrasting seasonal colour schemes for spring/summer and autumn/winter. However even by 1943 there were still Waffen-SS soldiers, including those in the premier SS divisions, who wore the single decal steel helmets without the camouflage fabric covering. The helmets had their previous shiny surface removed by soldiers daubing them with mud and camouflaging them with anything available, from vehicle paint to winter whitewash. In fact, by 1943 some artistic SS troops began to mimic the various dot camouflage uniform patterns by applying paint to the helmet while covering it with chicken wire netting. The colours varied, but on many examples soldiers applied browns, greens and ochres that were colours specifically issued to camouflage vehicles from mid-1943 onwards.

The Leibstandarte division's symbol was a skeleton key, in honour of its first commander, Josef 'Sepp' Dietrich (Dietrich is German for skeleton key or lock pick). It was retained and modified to later serve as the symbol for 1 SS Panzer Corps.

Appendix Three

The Second Model of the LSSAH Standard

The pre-SS formations

Stabswache (SA Control), 1923
Stosstrupp Adolf Hitler (SA Control), 1923

The formation of the SS

Stabswache, 1925
Schutzstaffel, 1925

The Leibstandarte units

SS Stabswache Berlin, 1933
SS Sonderkommando Berlin (also, SS Sonderkommando Zossen and Jüterbog), 1933
Adolf Hitler Standarte, 1933
Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, 1933
Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, 1934
Infanterie Regiment Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler (mot.), 1938
SS Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, 1941
SS Panzer Grenadier Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, 1942
1 SS Panzer Division Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, 1944

August 1938, LAH (Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler)

I Bataillon
- MG Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie

II Bataillon
- MG Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie

III Bataillon
- MG Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie

IV Bataillon
- MG Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie
- Inf Kompanie

13 Infanterie Geschütz Kompanie
14 Panzerjäger Kompanie
15 Kradschutzen Kompanie
Aufklärungs Zug
Pionier Zug
Kradschützen Zug
Nachrichten Zug
Musik Zug
Leichte Infanterie Kolonne

May 1941, LSSAH (Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler)

Stab mit Musikzug
I Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
II Bataillon
Stab
6 Kompanie
7 Kompanie
8 Kompanie
9 Kompanie
10 Kompanie
III Bataillon
Stab
11 Kompanie
12 Kompanie
13 Kompanie
14 Kompanie
15 Kompanie
IV Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
Sturmgeschütz Batterie
Leichte Infanterie Kolonne
Aufklärungs Abteilung
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
Artillerie Regiment
Stab
I Abteilung
II Abteilung
Pionier Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
Brücken Kolonne
Leichte Pionier Kolonne
Nachrichten Abteilung
Fernsprech Kompanie
Funk Kompanie
Nachschub Dienst
Stab
Werkstatt Kompanie
Betriebstoff Kolonne
1 Kw Kolonne
2 Kw Kolonne
3 Kw Kolonne
Sanitäts Staffel

February 1943 LSSAH (Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler)

Divisions Stab
Karenstelle
Musikzug
SS Grenadier Regiment 1
Regiment Stab
Stabskompanie

I Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
II Bataillon
Stab
6 Kompanie
7 Kompanie
8 Kompanie
9 Kompanie
10 Kompanie
III Bataillon
Stab
11 Kompanie
12 Kompanie
13 Kompanie
14 Kompanie
15 Kompanie
Flak Kompanie
Infanterie Geschütz Kompanie
Panzerjäger Kompanie

SS Grenadier Regiment 2
Regiment Stab
Stabskompanie
I Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
II Bataillon
Stab
6 Kompanie
7 Kompanie
8 Kompanie
9 Kompanie
10 Kompanie
III Bataillon
Stab
11 Kompanie
12 Kompanie
13 Kompanie
14 Kompanie
15 Kompanie
Flak Kompanie
Infanterie Geschütz Kompanie
Panzerjäger Kompanie

Panzer Regiment 1
Regiment Stab
Stabskompanie
I Abteilung
Abteilung Stab
Stabskompanie
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
II Abteilung
Abteilung Stab
Stabskompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
6 Kompanie
Schwere Panzer Kompanie
Panzer Pionier Kompanie
Panzer Werkstatt Kompanie
1 leichte Panzer Kolonne
2 leichte Panzer Kolonne
Sturmgeschütz Abteilung
Stab
Stabsbatterie
1 Batterie
2 Batterie
3 Batterie
Aufklärungs Abteilung
Stab
Nachrichten Zug

1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Panzer Späh Kompanie
5 Kompanie
Leicht Kolonne Panzer Aufklärungsabteilung

Artillerie Regiment
Stab
Stabsbatterie
Beobachtungs Batterie
Werfer Batterie

I Abteilung
Stab
1 Batterie
2 Batterie
3 Batterie

II Abteilung
Stab
4 Batterie
5 Batterie
6 Batterie

III Abteilung
Stab
7 Batterie
8 Batterie
9 Batterie

IV Abteilung
Stab
10 Batterie
11 Batterie
12 Batterie

Panzerjäger Abteilung
Stab
Nachrichten Zug
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie

Flak Abteilung
Stab
Stabsbatterie
1 Batterie
2 Batterie
3 Batterie
4 Batterie
5 Batterie
2cm Flak Zug

Pionier Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
Brückenkolonne
Leicht Pionier Kolonne

Nachrichten Abteilung
Stab
1 Panzer(Fe) Kompanie
2 Panzer(Fe) Kompanie
Leicht Panzer Nachrichten Kolonne

Wirtschafts Bataillon
Stab
Verpflegungsamt
Bäcker Kompanie
Schlächterei Kompanie
Verpflegungskolonne

Sanitäts Abteilung
Stab
1 Sanitärs Kompanie
2 Sanitärs Kompanie
Feldlazarett
1 Krankenkraftwagen Zug
2 Krankenkraftwagen Zug
3 Krankenkraftwagen Zug
Feldpostamt
Kriegsberichter Kompanie
Feldgendarmerie Trupp

Nachschub Dienst
Stab Division Nachschubführer
1 Kraftwagen Kolonne

2 Kraftwagen Kolonne
3 Kraftwagen Kolonne
4 Kraftwagen Kolonne
5 Kraftwagen Kolonne
6 Kraftwagen Kolonne
7 Kraftwagen Kolonne
8 Kraftwagen Kolonne
9 Kraftwagen Kolonne
10 Kraftwagen Kolonne
11 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne
12 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne
13 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne
14 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne
15 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne für Betriebstoff
16 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne für Betriebstoff
17 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne für Betriebstoff
18 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne für Betriebstoff
19 (groß) Kraftwagen Kolonne für Betriebstoff

Instandsetzungs Abteilung
Stab
1 Werkstatt Kompanie
2 Werkstatt Kompanie
3 Werkstatt Kompanie
4 Werkstatt Kompanie
5 Werkstatt Kompanie
Nachschub Kompanie

VII LSSAH
Bataillon Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie

1944 LSSAH (Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler)

Stab der Division

SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 1
Stab
I Bataillon
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
II Bataillon
6 Kompanie
7 Kompanie
8 Kompanie
9 Kompanie
10 Kompanie
III Bataillon
11 Kompanie
12 Kompanie
13 Kompanie
14 Kompanie
15 Kompanie
16 Flak Kompanie
17 Infanterie Geschütz Kompanie
18 Panzerjäger Kompanie
19 Aufklärungs Kompanie
20 Pionier Kompanie

SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment 2
Stab
I Bataillon
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
II Bataillon
6 Kompanie
7 Kompanie
8 Kompanie

9 Kompanie
10 Kompanie
III Bataillon
11 Kompanie
12 Kompanie
13 Kompanie
14 Kompanie
15 Fla Kompanie
16 Infanteriegeschütz Kompanie
17 Panzerjäger Kompanie
18 Aufklärungs Kompanie
19 Pionier Kompanie

SS Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung 1
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
6 Kompanie

SS Panzer Regiment 1
Stab
I Bataillon
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
II Bataillon
5 Kompanie
6 Kompanie
7 Kompanie
8 Kompanie
Schwere Kompanie
Pionier Kompanie

SS Panzerjäger Abteilung
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie

SS Sturmgeschütz Abteilung
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie

SS Panzer Artillerie Regiment
Stab
I Abteilung
1 Batterie
2 Batterie
3 Batterie
II Abteilung
4 Batterie
5 Batterie
6 Batterie
III Abteilung
7 Batterie
8 Batterie
9 Batterie
IV Abteilung
10 Batterie
11 Batterie
12 Batterie

SS Flak Abteilung 1
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie
5 Kompanie
2cm Flak Aug

SS Panzer Pionier Bataillon
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie
3 Kompanie
4 Kompanie

SS Panzer Nachrichten Abteilung
Stab
1 Kompanie
2 Kompanie

Appendix Four

Waffen-SS Order of Battle

Kursk, July 1943

2 SS Panzer Korps – SS Obergruppenführer Paul Hausser

1 SS Panzergrenadier Division Leibstandarte SS 'Adolf Hitler'

SS Brigadeführer Wisch: 1 SS Panzer Regiment, 1 SS Panzer Grenadier Regiment, 2 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, 1 SS Panzer Artillerie Regiment, 1 SS Panzer Reconnaissance Bataillon, 1 SS Panzer Engineer Bataillon, 1 SS Flak Bataillon

Strength: **106 tanks and 35 assault guns**

2 SS Panzergrenadier Division 'Das Reich'

SS Gruppenführer Kruger: 1 SS Panzer Regiment, 3 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 'Deutschland', 4 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment Der Führer, 2 SS Panzer Artillerie Regiment, 2 SS Panzer Reconnaissance Bataillon, 2 SS Flak Bataillon, 2 SS Panzer Engineer Bataillon, 2 SS Flak Bataillon

Strength: 145 tanks and 34 assault guns

3 SS Panzergrenadier Division 'Totenkopf'

SS Brigadeführer Priess: 3 SS Panzer Regiment, 5 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 'Thule', 6 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 'Theodor Eicke', 3 SS Panzer Artillerie Regiment, 3 SS Panzer Reconnaissance Bataillon, 3 SS Flak Bataillon, 3 SS Panzer Engineer Bataillon, 3 SS Flak Bataillon

Strength: 139 tanks and 35 assault guns

122 Artillerie Command (Arko)

1 Field Howitzer Detachment, 861 Artillerie Regiment (mot); 1 Field Howitzer Detachment, 3 Bataillon, 818 Artillerie Regiment (mot); 3 Smoke Truppen; 55 Werfer Regiment; 1 Werfer Lehr Regiment

680 Pionier Regiment

627 Pionier Bataillon (mot), 666 Pionier Bataillon (mot)

Strength: 390 tanks and 104 assault guns

Ardennes December 1944

Units:
277 Volksgrenadier Division
1 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 25
12 Volksgrenadier Division
Grenadier Regiment 48
Grenadier Regiment 89
Fuselier Regiment 27
3 Flak Sturm Regiment
4 Flak Sturm Regiment
340 Volksgrenadier Division
3 Fallschirmjäger Division (two coys from SS Pionier Bataillon 'LSSAH')

1 SS Panzer Division
2 SS Panzer Pionier Abteilung 1
2 SS Panzer Artillerie Regiment 1
12 SS Panzer Division
Schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung 559
Schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung 560
SS Panzer Regiment 12
SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 25
SS Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung 2 'Das Reich'
9 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 4 'Der Führer'

3 SS Panzer Artillerie Regiment 2 'Das Reich'
SS Panzergrenadier Regiment
SS Werfer Abteilung 12
SS Flak Abteilung
SS Aufklärungs Abteilung 12

SS Artillerie Regiment 12
SS Panzerjäger Abteilung 12
1 Panzerjäger Abteilung 12
1 Panzergrenadier Regiment 26

2 Artillerie Regiment 12
Schwere Panzerjäger Abteilung 560

2 SS Panzer Korps
2 SS Panzer Division
9 SS Panzer Division
10 SS Panzer Division
Schwere SS Panzer Abteilung
SS Werfer Abteilung
560 Volksgrenadier Division
116 Panzer Division
12 SS Panzer Division
3 Fallschirmjäger Division
277 Volksgrenadier Division
3 Panzergrenadier Division

Kampfgruppe Peiper
Main armoured vehicles used in the Kampfgruppe consisted of: Pz.Kpfw.IV Ausf.H, Pz.Kpfw.V Ausf.G 'Panthers', Pz.Kpfw.VI 'Tigers', Pz.Kpfw.VI Ausf.B 'King Tigers', Bison Ausf.M Sd.Kfz.138/1, 150mm sIG.33/2 howitzer carrier (rear mounted), and Wirbelwinds

SS Panzer Regiment 1 'LSSAH'
1 SS Panzer Regiment 1

HQ Company
1 SS Panzer Regiment 1

Supply Company 1 SS Panzer Regiment 1
1 SS Panzer Regiment 1
2 SS Panzer Regiment 1
6 SS Panzer Regiment 1
Schwere SS Panzer Abteilung 501

Supply Company, s SS Panzer Abteilung 501
1 s SS Panzer Abteilung 501
2 s SS Panzer Abteilung 501
3 s SS Panzer Abteilung 501
7 SS Panzer Regiment 1

9 SS Panzer Regiment 1
10 SS Panzer Regiment 1 (Flak)

Maintenance Company,
SS Panzer Regiment 1
3 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
9 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
10 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
11 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
12 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
4 SS Pz Abt 501 (leichte)

Supply Company,
3 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
13 SS Panzergrenadier Regiment 2
3 SS Panzerpionier Bataillon 1
Flak Abteilung 84
Fallschirmjäger Regiment 9
I Regiment 9
II Regiment 9

Kampfgruppe Krag
(Commanded by SS Sturmbannführer Ernst Krag)
SS Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung 2
2 SS Sturmgeschütz Abteilung
1 SS Panzerpionier Battalion 2
1 SS Panzerartillerie Regiment 2
One Medical Support Zug

Appendix Five

Ranks

German Army	Waffen-SS	British Army
Gemeiner, Landser	Schütze	Private
–	Oberschütze	–
Grenadier	Sturmmann	Lance Corporal
Obergrenadier	–	–
Gefreiter	Rottenführer	Corporal
Obergefreiter	Unterscharführer	–
Stabsgefreiter	–	–
Unteroffizier	Scharführer	Sergeant
Unterfeldwebel	Oberscharführer	Colour Sergeant
Feldwebel	–	–
Oberfeldwebel	Hauptscharführer	Sergeant Major
Stabsfeldwebel	Hauptbereitschaftsleiter	–
–	Sturmscharführer	Warrant Officer
Leutnant	Untersturmführer	Second Lieutenant
Oberleutnant	Obersturmführer	First Lieutenant
Hauptmann	Hauptsturmführer	Captain
Major	Sturmbannführer	Major
Oberstleutnant	Obersturmbannführer	Lieutenant Colonel
Oberst	Standartenführer	Colonel
–	Oberführer	–
Generalmajor	Brigadeführer	Brigadier General
Generalleutnant	Gruppenführer	Major General
General	Obergruppenführer	Lieutenant General
Generaloberst	Oberstgruppenführer	General
Generalfeldmarschall	Reichsführer-SS	Field Marshal

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